Excellence in Action

Best Practices in First Nations, Metis and Inuit Economic Development

Symposium Report

January 23 to 25, 2007

Report prepared by
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Foreword

Message from Premier Lorne Calvert

On November 25, 2005, at the First Ministers' meeting on Aboriginal issues in Kelowna, British Columbia, I made a commitment to host a symposium on Aboriginal economic development. At the Kelowna meeting, I emphasized the need for partnerships from all sectors of the economy and society to advance Aboriginal economic development and increase labour force participation.

Western Premiers, at their 2006 Conference and the Council of the Federation at its 2006 summer meeting, endorsed the commitment. *Excellence in Action – Best Practices in First Nations, Métis and Inuit Economic Development* was the fulfillment of the commitment.

The Province was pleased and honoured to form a partnership with the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations and the Clarence Campeau Development Fund to organize and host *Excellence in Action*. Its dynamism and success were a direct result of this partnership.

The symposium showcased successful First Nations, Métis and Inuit economic development projects, and the gala dinner celebrated the richness and diversity of First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultures.

At the symposium, partnership agreements between business interests and Aboriginal communities and governments were both initiated and finalized. Now we must continue in collaboration with each other to build on the momentum generated by this event.

I see this report as a critical tool in furthering our ongoing commitment to advance Aboriginal economic development in Saskatchewan and throughout Canada.

The Honourable Lorne Calvert
Premier of Saskatchewan

Message from Chief Lawrence Joseph

Excellence in Action, our symposium on Aboriginal economic development, was by all accounts a great success. First, I must commend the organizing committee and the host partners in making this a memorable event. A number of participants, including chiefs, business leaders and government representatives, have since talked to me about the important messages and themes that they saw emerging from the symposium. It is now essential that we move from ideas to action. This report is a tool we can use to communicate those ideas within our own circles, as well as with leaders from business, government and First Nations who were unable to attend.

Our work must now evolve into new economic development initiatives for First Nations communities in partnership with the business sector and facilitated by all orders of government. We must define strategies, identify results and make them happen.

I am hopeful that all of the participants will continue to build on the momentum of *Excellence in Action* by following through on contacts and building those new relationships in the coming months. Our symposium was about finding the best way to share our riches between all peoples and prospering together. This is a goal the FSIN will continue to work toward, because it is also the goal of the treaties that were made in the spirit of partnership and mutual benefit.

Huy, Huy,

Chief Lawrence Joseph
Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations

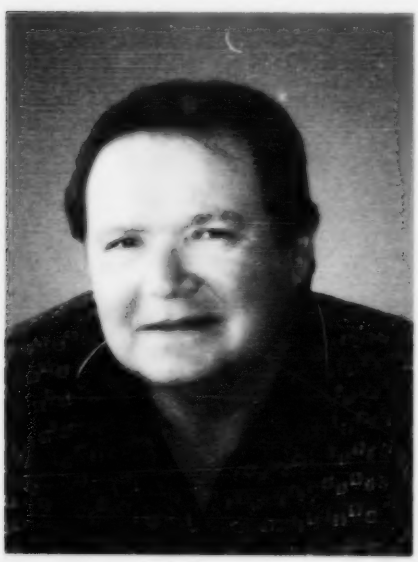
Message from Vice Chair Ron Rivard, Clarence Campeau Development Fund

The Clarence Campeau Development Fund was honoured to be part of the *Excellence in Action* symposium. The significance of the *Excellence in Action* symposium was evident from the interest of the Aboriginal, government, community and business representatives taking part in this event. It represented a major networking opportunity to connect with other jurisdictions across Canada to determine what is working well and what needs to be done in terms of First Nations, Métis and Inuit integration in economic development.

Our organization is celebrating its 10th year of successful operations in providing financial and economic development services to Métis clients in Saskatchewan. This translates into successful businesses, job creation and economic enhancement, which in turn strengthens our communities and contributes to building and maintaining a better society for us all. We found this symposium to be a valuable contribution to the economic development interests of the Métis businesses and organizations throughout Saskatchewan and Canada.

The *Excellence in Action* symposium provided a great opportunity for open discussion and practical ideas, particularly in setting directions for the Métis People. The themes and workshops we shared with the First Nations, Inuit and other Métis representatives were truly valuable experiences for all participants. We will take the lessons learned in this historic event and apply them to the future betterment of all Aboriginal people in Canada. We are also optimistic that the enthusiasm and challenge that people shared in this symposium will drive future symposiums on best practices in First Nations, Métis and Inuit economic development.

Ron Rivard
Vice-Chair
Clarence Campeau Development Fund



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Excellence in Action – Best Practices in First Nations, Métis and Inuit Economic Development was the fulfillment of a commitment made by The Honourable Lorne Calvert, Premier of Saskatchewan, at the First Ministers' meeting on Aboriginal issues. At this meeting, he emphasized the need for partnerships from all sectors of the economy and society to advance First Nations, Métis and Inuit economic development and increase labour force participation.

Excellence in Action was hosted and organized by the Government of Saskatchewan in partnership with the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN) and the Clarence Campeau Development Fund (CCDF). The Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), Aboriginal Business Canada, and Industry Canada were also involved in its development.

The symposium was aimed at stimulating greater Aboriginal economic activity and labour market participation in all areas of Canada and all sectors of the economy. Its key objectives were to:

- showcase and celebrate successful First Nations, Métis and Inuit economic development projects;
- further build corporate/Aboriginal/government partnerships in economic development;
- identify barriers to progress and solutions; and
- develop a compilation of best practices and analyze them to identify government, corporate and Aboriginal policy approaches that provide the best environment for projects to succeed.

The opening session of the symposium, *Challenge, Change and Development: Strategies for Success*, highlighted examples of First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities and businesses that have generated, and are sustaining, economic and employment benefits. In the process of identifying best practices in economic development, the session's panel also addressed the obstacles and challenges that have typically been faced by indigenous people. Workshops in the opening session explored in more detail the individual successes, enablers and challenges for First Nation, Métis and Inuit communities and businesses as well as examples specific to Aboriginal women. Additionally, workshops examined in more detail best practices related to technology integration, venture capital accessibility, procurement policies, government strategies and partnerships, and home ownership on reserve.

In the session entitled *Maximizing Opportunities in Strategic Sectors*, the symposium examined a range of sectors that have proven to be a good fit for First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities and businesses. Session panellists profiled successful partnerships and alliances that have increased the participation of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people and communities. Panellists in this session provided an overview of best practices in strategic sectors from both community-based and business perspectives. Workshops featured prominent sectors in which examples of First Nations-, Métis- and Inuit-owned businesses and joint ventures were highlighted.

In the session on *What's Making a Difference in Training, Skills Development and Labour Market Development*, panellists explored some of the key factors behind successful labour market outcomes. Workshops featured presentations that examined different approaches or strategies that have had an effect on First Nations, Métis and Inuit skills and labour market development.

Throughout, the presentations and workshop discussions explored the factors deemed to be most critical to successful Aboriginal economic development and, thereby, began the process of articulating these and offering pathways to finding solutions to ongoing challenges. Emerging from these

discussions were some themes and identifiable next steps in pursuit of sustainable economic development for Aboriginal Peoples. Many of these were identified by the presenters while others emerged from the workshop discussions.

Throughout the presentations and in the workshop discussions, Aboriginal economic development was invariably connected to the broader conception of community development, a more holistic approach incorporating both social and economic development that is inextricably connected rather than distinct. This created a focus on long-range, strategic, community-based planning processes designed to identify not only sustainable economic development opportunities, but appropriate opportunities that contribute to social development, which respects culture and tradition, and advances the long-term aspirations of communities for self-determination. Strategic, long-term, community-based planning processes, however, often fall short where Aboriginal communities do not have sufficient control over their own institutions, regulatory instruments, lands, resources or revenues, all of which were viewed as the necessary prerequisites for enabling the economic development goals of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people.

Sustainability depends on long-range planning and consistent leadership devoted to a well-devised economic development program. Key elements of long-term strategic planning processes include taking into account infrastructure, training and employment opportunities, economic growth, capacity and revenue generation as part of the development of an overall business plan.

The creation of economic opportunities, generation of wealth and full participation in the labour market have done more to advance social development in some Aboriginal communities than those that have remained largely reliant on government funding. Funding for economic development, however, has been crowded out in relation to funding for social development. Governments (federal, provincial and territorial) must redress the imbalance in the funding of Aboriginal programming to reflect a more holistic community development approach that does not disproportionately favour social over economic development.

For many indigenous people, their aspirations for self-determination and self-reliance as a people and culture are inseparable and bound to the land. Meaningful control over their "place" and the ability to take meaningful control over the management of the resources and, therefore, the wealth that resides on that land are fundamental to the desire for self-determination and self-sufficiency.

Throughout the symposium there was an expressed need for Aboriginal people to look beyond their communities and actively assert themselves into the mainstream of economic life in Canada. This often means asserting the right to be actively engaged by all orders of government in the long-term economic planning of their regions and the country as a whole. The role of governments in policy development remains important in order to create the conditions in which economic development opportunities can be pursued. Increasingly, however, First Nations, Métis and Inuit people look to each other and to the private sector to build meaningful partnerships. Partnerships provide access to capital, entrance into markets and opportunities for building managerial, technical and human resource capacity.

Discussions on making education and training relevant to First Nations, Métis and Inuit youth, and thereby improving participation rates in education in Aboriginal communities, pointed to the importance of increasing awareness about options for careers and taking advantage of labour market opportunities. The participation rate for Aboriginal youth in education is more likely to improve if education and training are more closely linked to labour market opportunities.

Education and training should contribute to the development of First Nations, Métis and Inuit entrepreneurs and to the development of an Aboriginal labour force. Aboriginal communities can address this by finding their own "entrepreneurial champions" to provide mentorship, but they must also pursue opportunities for mentoring and job coaching as a component of the partnerships they form with governments and the private sector.

Universally, the symposium was seen as the beginning of a meaningful dialogue about Aboriginal economic development; not as an ongoing challenge (although clearly challenges remain), but as a sharing of best practices and positive examples. The results of this dialogue point to the factors and conditions that have led to successful economic development strategies for First Nations, Métis and Inuit people. This dialogue has also made important suggestions about what next steps need to be taken by Aboriginal communities, governments and industry toward fostering those conditions and improving the opportunities for success. These included:

1. *The government should develop an integrated policy framework for Aboriginal economic development that favours "opportunity-based" programming, contributes to sustainable economic and business development, and is responsive to First Nations (off-reserve and on-reserve), Métis and Inuit challenges and opportunities.*

2. *Aboriginal communities and businesses need to "take inventory" of opportunities to assess those offering the greatest returns. This means identifying opportunities based on an understanding of each community's capacity and location.*

3. *Governments and the Aboriginal leadership must continue to clarify jurisdictional roles and provide a legal basis for self-determination to allow Aboriginal communities to fully pursue economic development opportunities.*

4. *Aboriginal leaders need to ensure that economic development opportunities have the full support of citizens by pursuing community-driven decision-making through a meaningful duty to consult.*

5. *To improve transparency, economic development bodies should be independent of political processes and have their own mandates.*

6. *Aboriginal communities and businesses need to focus on long-range, strategic planning processes by developing good business plans, including identifying support systems, financial (including appropriate reporting mechanisms), human resource and infrastructure plans.*

7. *Governments (federal, provincial and territorial) must redress the imbalance in the funding of Aboriginal programming to reflect a more holistic community development approach that does not disproportionately favour social over economic development.*

8. *Without clear entitlement and control over resources, Aboriginal communities are at a distinct disadvantage in terms of land use and revenue sharing, both critical to the pursuit of economic development strategies. Governments (federal, provincial, territorial and Aboriginal) must work to clarify development and land use rights, as well as resource benefit-sharing arrangements.*

9. *Both the federal and First Nations governments should pursue ongoing treaty land entitlement processes in a way that more directly ties them to economic development planning.*

10. *Governments must partner with Aboriginal communities to plan and develop the necessary infrastructure (transportation, communications, etc.) to pursue economic development opportunities.*

11. *Federal, provincial and territorial governments must include First Nations, Métis and Inuit in their respective long-term economic development planning processes.*

12. *Federal, provincial, territorial and Aboriginal governments need to support strategies that specifically enable First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Aboriginal women to become empowered and actively engaged in the economy.*

13. *There needs to be more mechanisms or venues, such as the AFN Corporate Challenge, to facilitate the engagement of Aboriginal communities and businesses with the private sector. Governments (federal, provincial, territorial and Aboriginal), Aboriginal communities and businesses, and private sector representatives need to work together to find opportunities for encouraging partnerships.*

14. *The leadership of Aboriginal communities must take the initiative to do more to improve the participation rate of First Nations, Métis and Inuit youth in education.*

15. *Educational institutions, governments and Aboriginal people need to partner in developing programs to bring training to Aboriginal communities.*

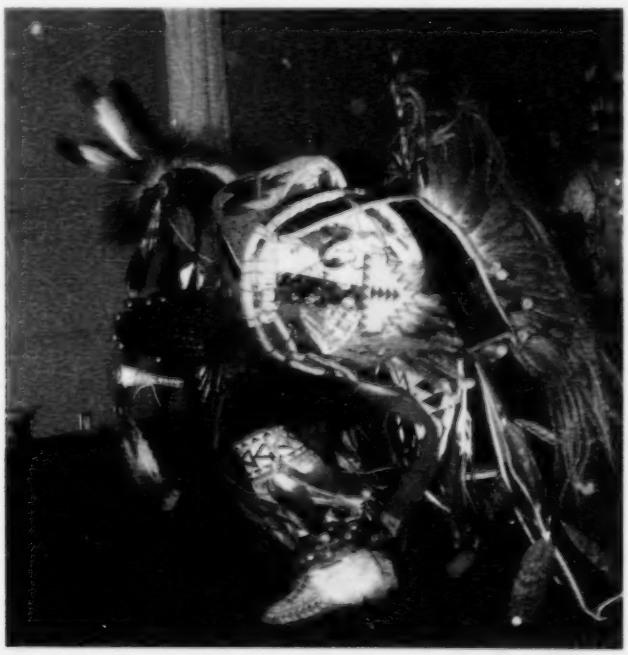
16. *There should be better co-ordination of labour market research among industry groups, employers, training institutions, and employment programs and agencies. More work done could be done through employment agencies to ensure linkages are made between market needs and trained people.*

17. *Governments need to examine the funding formulas of their education support programs to make them more effective. Federal, provincial, territorial and Aboriginal governments must share the same vision and agree on delivery mechanisms. Governments should have performance measures built into the training dollars they spend.*

18. *More opportunities for mentoring are needed, and participants talked of the utility of mentoring as a function of government funding agencies. Aboriginal communities need to enlist private enterprise in mentoring activities as part of employment and development initiatives.*

19. *Communities and businesses need to share more of their expertise and share best practices through institutions such as the Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce in Manitoba or the Atlantic Aboriginal Economic Developers Network.*

20. *A follow-up symposium on Aboriginal economic development should be convened by the leaders of Aboriginal organizations and in conjunction with government and private industry to measure progress and continue to disseminate best practices and celebrate successful First Nations, Métis and Inuit economic development.*



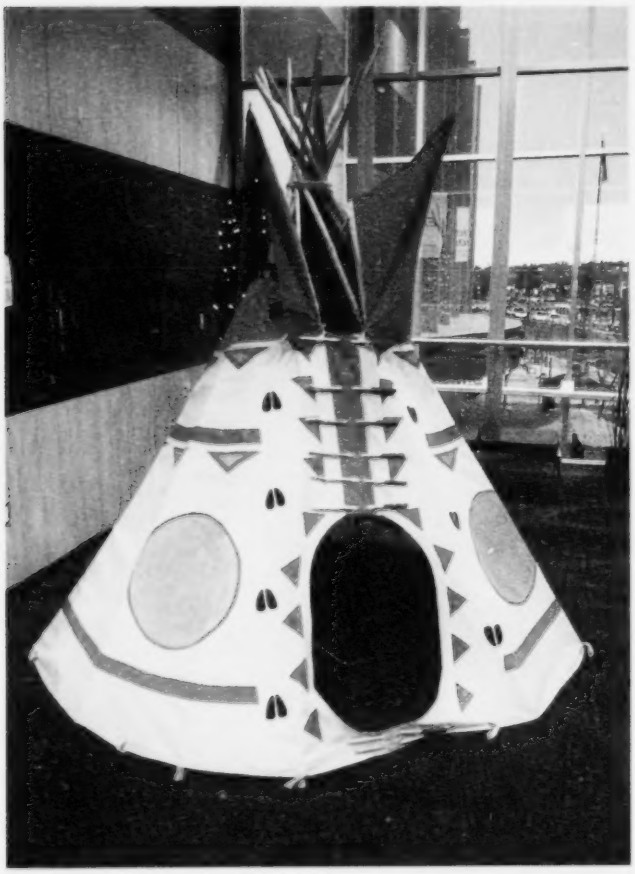
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Background to the National Aboriginal Economic Development Symposium

Excellence in Action - Best Practices in First Nations, Métis and Inuit Economic Development was the fulfillment of a commitment made by The Honourable Lorne Calvert, Premier of Saskatchewan, at the First Ministers' meeting on Aboriginal issues. At this meeting, he emphasized the need for partnerships from all sectors of the economy and society to advance First Nations, Métis and Inuit economic development and increase labour force participation.

Excellence in Action was hosted and organized by the Government of Saskatchewan in partnership with the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN) and the Clarence Campeau Development Fund (CCDF). The Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), Aboriginal Business Canada, and Industry Canada were also involved in its development.

The symposium attracted approximately 700 participants representing First Nations, Métis and Inuit people from across Canada. The attendance of a number of national leaders demonstrates the historic significance and national scope of the event. Provincial and territorial representatives included Premier Lorne Calvert (Saskatchewan), Premier Gordon Campbell (British Columbia), Premier Gary Doer (Manitoba), Premier Danny Williams (Newfoundland and Labrador), Premier Joseph Handley (Northwest Territories) and Premier Paul Okalik (Nunavut). Representatives of a number of national, provincial and territorial Aboriginal organizations and communities included Chief Phil Fontaine (Assembly of First Nations), President Clément Chartier (Métis National Council) and Chief Lawrence Joseph (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations). In addition, 65 youth delegates from across the country conducted their own Youth Forum after the formal symposium proceedings.



The symposium also featured a wide range of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal enterprises ranging from large corporate enterprises to medium and small business ventures. The diversity of scale was demonstrated most graphically in the trade show which showcased First Nations, Métis and Inuit businesses of all sizes alongside major non-aboriginal corporate representatives and exhibits by provincial Crown corporations and governments.

Statistics Canada describes Aboriginal peoples in Canada according to three distinct groupings – First Nations, Métis and Inuit – comprising roughly 3 per cent of the Canadian population. First Nations people are the largest demographic group, representing 62 per cent of the Aboriginal population. The Métis represent another 30 per cent and the Inuit 5 per cent. An additional 3 per cent identify themselves as having a shared identity with at least one of these groups. Seventy per cent of all indigenous people in Canada live outside of reserve lands, with 68 per cent reporting their residence within an urban area.

While collectively seen as "Aboriginal people" by the non-Aboriginal population, First Nations, Métis and Inuit people are distinct culturally, linguistically, geographically and historically. First Nations are found throughout Canada, the Métis are concentrated predominantly in Western Canada, and the Inuit primarily in the Northern Arctic, the Territories and parts of Quebec and Labrador.

The legal status of First Nations was confirmed by treaty and with the *Indian Act*, although their recognition as a people did not constitute full inclusion into Canadian national, economic

or social life. The status of Inuit people was not confirmed until a decision by the Supreme Court in 1939 extending the federal government's power to make laws affecting Indians to Inuit people. The Métis struggle began with Manitoba's entrance into Confederation, but they were not recognized as a legally distinct people along with First Nations and the Inuit until the *Constitution Act, 1982*. As a consequence of their distinctive aspirations and separate struggles for recognition, the indigenous people of Canada have traditionally asserted their efforts for self-determination individually rather than collectively.

Excellence in Action was an opportunity for First Nations, Métis and Inuit people to come together to celebrate their unique success stories. In fact, the participation and collaboration of First Nations, Métis and Inuit is itself a "best practice," demonstrating that despite their unique traditions, cultures and historical circumstances they can collaborate to advance their collective goals for full and meaningful inclusion in Canada's economic and social life. An illustration of this spirit of co-operation and collaboration, the symposium's gala was culturally and historically significant in bringing together artists representative of all three peoples in a celebration of indigenous culture.

In this spirit of co-operation and collaboration, the symposium was aimed at stimulating greater Aboriginal economic activity and labour market participation in all areas of Canada and all sectors of the economy. Its key objectives were to:

- showcase and celebrate successful First Nations, Métis and Inuit economic development projects;
- further build corporate/Aboriginal/government partnerships in economic development;
- identify barriers to progress and solutions; and
- develop a compilation of best practices and analyze them to identify government, corporate and Aboriginal policy approaches that provide the best environment for projects to succeed.

Two of the symposium's key objectives – showcasing and celebrating successful First Nations, Métis and Inuit economic development projects and further building on partnerships amoung business interests, Aboriginal communities and governments – were realized at the event. An Aboriginal Workplace Partnership agreement aimed at recruiting, retaining and promoting Aboriginal employees was signed with Siemens Canada, and a Memorandum of Understanding between the Thunderchild First Nation and Savanna Energy Services Corporation for a drilling rig and service rigs was finalized at the symposium. The event was valuable for its networking opportunities. Partnerships initially discussed at the symposium are now being developed by their proponents.

Many speakers at the symposium acknowledged the progress that has been made in Aboriginal economic development, but also identified major challenges that remain. This report outlines the successful examples of Aboriginal economic development that shed light on the conditions that allowed them to overcome challenges and barriers to economic development. The chapters that follow present some of the identified challenges and barriers to economic development, and the suggestions made by symposium speakers and participants that could lead to further progress.

CHAPTER 2:
CHALLENGE, CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT: STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

2.1 Background

The opening session of the symposium highlighted examples of First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities and businesses that have generated, and are sustaining, economic and employment benefits. In the process of identifying best practices in economic development, the panellists also addressed the obstacles and challenges that have typically been faced by First Nations, Métis and Inuit people.

2.2 Panel Presentations

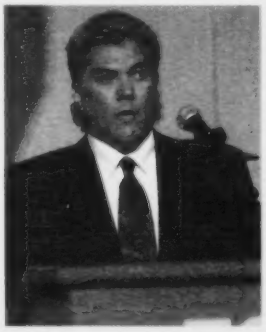
Bernd Christmas

The presentation highlighted several lucrative partnerships between the Membertou First Nation and private industry in a number of sectors: oil and gas, engineering, mining, geographic information systems (GIS), information technology, aerospace, business management and consulting services. These partnerships have strategically increased the profile of the Membertou First Nation among major private sector companies. As a result of the newly forged business partnerships and initiatives, the Membertou First Nation has been able to initiate proactive education and career-related training programs to capitalize on employment opportunities.

There needs to be a rebalancing of investments from the traditional emphasis on social development towards an increasing emphasis on economic development. Part of this process involves improving the financial situation of communities, which means greater transparency and accountability. With a financial house in order, a vastly improved capacity in management and administration, and the capacity to generate new revenue streams, Aboriginal communities will reduce dependence on transfer income and move along the path to self-sufficiency.

Marty Klyne

The fundamental social development issues, like education, housing and other imperatives, will only be dealt with by developing economic opportunities and creating stable and well-paid jobs. Communities and regions that are economically strong have the healthiest people, the best education rates, the most acceptable housing, and strong and sustainable cultures. While programs that address societal needs have their place, they do not lead to any kind of fundamental change on the scale that is required. The government must address the imbalance in its funding for Aboriginal programming, which now heavily favours social over economic development programming.



Accelerated participation in the Canadian economy is the most promising path towards reducing the dependency of Aboriginal people on social support. The government should develop an integrated policy framework for Aboriginal economic development that favours "opportunity-based" programming, contributes to sustainable economic and business development, and is responsive to both off-reserve and on-reserve challenges and opportunities.

Dr. Wanda Wuttunee

Dr. Wuttunee stressed "community capitalism," pointing to the successes enjoyed by the Prince Albert Grand Council, the Kitsaki Management Limited Partnership and the Tribal Councils Investment Group of Manitoba. Indigenous people have a number of options to consider in making decisions about their social and economic future. They can foster the further development of individual entrepreneurs, an approach that has achieved great success in recent years. They can form alliances with "Corporate Canada," an approach that offers many possibilities. They can further develop the capacity of First Nations, Métis and Inuit "governmental" organizations, notably band councils, to undertake economic activities. Aboriginal co-operatives fill an important role in political, social and economic capacity building by providing skills and business development, mentoring and employment. What is important, and appears to be happening with greater frequency, is that economic development is effectively integrated into the values of the community.

2.3 Workshops and Presentations

Workshops in the opening session (*Challenge, Change and Development: Strategies for Success*) explored in more detail individual successes, explored the enabling factors, as well as barriers and challenges, experienced by First Nation, Métis and Inuit communities and businesses, and by Aboriginal women. Additionally, workshops examined in more detail integrating technology, access to venture capital, procurement policies, government strategies and partnerships, and home ownership on reserve.

Opening the Toolbox for First Nations Economic Development
Presentations by Willie Littlechild, Judy Whiteduck and Lester Lafond explored the Assembly of First Nations' (AFN) Corporate Challenge, the development of the First Nations Economic Blueprint, and the creation of the Muskeg Lake First Nation urban reserve.

The AFN Corporate Challenge addresses the need to develop partnerships with the non-Aboriginal business community. One of the enablers highlighted in the presentation was the role of governments in facilitating partnerships between Aboriginal people and industry, such as the First Nations Economic Partnerships Initiative (FNEPI) in Alberta.

The presentation by Judy Whiteduck explored the themes raised by the First Nations Economic Experts Advisory Group in developing an Aboriginal economic blueprint. Among these themes was the importance of business development as part of the process of self-determination and governance. Aboriginal communities need to have the institutions of government and management capacity, the infrastructure, human resources and revenues in place that will allow them to guide successful development. This is especially important in small communities where the lines between governance and other relationships within the community are often blurred.

Featured in the last presentation was the need for a global perspective on economic development that looks for opportunities on and off reserve. A case in point, the Muskeg Lake First Nation took advantage of existing infrastructure (particularly transportation), a large consumer base and trends in a growing off-reserve First Nations population in pursuing economic opportunities through the creation of an urban reserve.

Opening the Toolbox for Métis Economic Development
Presentations in this workshop focused on access to capital as a key to Métis and Non-Status Indian business development. Featured in the presentations were the Clarence Campeau Development Fund (CCDF) and the Louis Riel Capital Corporation (LRCC).

The CCDF provides equity to Métis businesses in Saskatchewan. Over the course of the past 10 years, CCDF has leveraged approximately $44 million in investments and has been responsible for the creation of roughly 1,000 jobs. The independence of its board has been key to success by allowing CCDF to make sound business decisions removed from political interference. One area in which the CCDF has enjoyed less success, and seeks to improve, has been in brokering large venture capital deals.

The LRCC is a Manitoba Métis-owned lending institution created to finance the startup, acquisition and/or expansion of viable Métis- and Non-Status Indian-controlled small businesses based in Manitoba. LRCC requires that applicants for financing provide detailed and viable business plans as a condition of its credit granting activities.

Opening the Toolbox for Inuit Economic Development
Bill Lyall (Arctic Co-operatives Limited) focused his presentation on the challenges to business development in small isolated communities. He talked about the traditions of close relationships and a focus on family connections as a challenge for developing appropriate governance policies and relationships in economic development ventures. A main theme of his presentation was the importance of developing appropriate governance structures and more formal business relationships in smaller communities.

Opening the Toolbox for Aboriginal Women's Economic Development
Mary Jamieson outlined the contribution of Aboriginal women to the economy was diminished with the residential school system, which tried to introduce them to non-Aboriginal "traditional" female roles and removed them from their historic presence in the economic life of their families and communities. Federal, provincial, territorial and Aboriginal governments need to support strategies that specifically enable Aboriginal women to become empowered and actively engaged in the economy.

Integrating Technology for Community Growth and Economic Development

Infrastructure as the backbone of community wellness and growth was the message from the workshop entitled *Integrating Technology for Community Growth and Economic Development.* In his presentation, Frank Suraci (Siemens Canada Ltd.) focused on connectivity and Internet access to households as a key factor in community development (e.g. e-health, e-learning, and other e-services). An example of this is the Mohawk Council of Kahnawake, which was approached in 1998 to establish itself as an Internet service provider. This began a process of technological development that helped the community branch out into the international scene and led to its partnership with Siemens.

Understanding Venture Capital

In surveys, 48 per cent of Aboriginal companies identify the lack of capital as a barrier to business growth. In order to provide Aboriginal business with the necessary capital, the First Nations and Métis Fund was created by the Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan (CIC). The fund provides investment capital to new or expanding businesses that are majority-owned or controlled by First Nations or Métis people.

Procurement Policies

The Procurement Strategy for Aboriginal Business (PSAB) was launched by the federal government in an effort to increase the number of Aboriginal suppliers bidding for, and winning, federal contracts. The PSAB makes it easier for the government and Aboriginal firms to do business with each other. For example, certain contracts are being set aside for competition among Aboriginal businesses. The strategy promotes subcontracting to Aboriginal firms and encourages them to form joint ventures with other Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal businesses. The set-aside program for Aboriginal businesses has a target of two to five per cent of departmental budgets. Over $20 billion is spent on procurement annually, and the corresponding procurement target for First Nations, Métis and Inuit businesses is designed to be in the $400 million to $500 million range.

Participants also heard about SaskPower and its efforts to develop an Aboriginal Procurement Strategy and its participation in CIC's Aboriginal Procurement Advisory Committee. In 2006, SaskPower purchased $2.1 million in goods and services from 53 different Aboriginal companies and has over 200 such businesses in its supplier database.

Government Strategies and Partnerships

Donavon Young spoke to the commitment by the Government of Alberta to provide over $20 million toward economic

development initiatives for Aboriginal people. Part of the First Nations Economic Partnerships Initiative is designed to bring First Nations and Alberta industry together to form partnerships. The Alberta programs are focused on the following sectors: community development, energy and resources, holistic and medical services, fibre wood waste, and forestry. Workshop participants heard about efforts by the FSIN Economic and Community Development Secretariat to co-ordinate their work in the development of a Saskatchewan Economic Development Union Framework (SEDU). The main theme of the presentation was that government strategies should be required to include First Nations people in planning the future of the Saskatchewan economy.

Similarly, a Manitoba government initiative known as the Premier's Economic Advisory Council (PEAC), which provides independent advice from business and labour, has more recently become a vehicle for increasing indigenous people's participation in a range of procurement and tendering processes.

Home Ownership on Reserve

First Nations need to take a multifaceted approach to housing problems was the message from Chris Maracle's presentation in this workshop. The Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte (MBQ) Housing Program allows First Nations people to secure loans to purchase their homes, turning the issue of housing from a community liability into a source of wealth and equity for individual homeowners and their children.

The band observed immediate, tangible socio-economic benefits as a result of the program, including improvements in educational outcomes, better health from better housing conditions, the creation of construction firms, the development of a real estate market, and a host of other benefits.

CHAPTER 3:
MAXIMIZING OPPORTUNITIES IN STRATEGIC SECTORS

3.1 Background

This session of the symposium examined a range of sectors that have proven a good fit for First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities and businesses. Panellists provided an overview of best practices in strategic sectors from both community-based and business perspectives. This session profiled successful partnerships and alliances that have increased the participation of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people and communities in economic development.

3.2 Panel Presentations

Chief Clarence Louie

A major theme of Chief Louie's address was that through economic development, communities might begin to find the resources and opportunities to pursue other social development goals such as education, health and self-governance. Economic development has become the fundamental method for improving the standard of living. In short, the pursuit of social justice and equity for Aboriginal people is not possible without economic justice. The Osoyoos Indian Band has become a multifaceted corporation that owns and manages numerous successful businesses and provides employment that spans a number of First Nations within .he region. In addition to the businesses, the band is enjoying socio-economic development that is vastly improving the community's social, educational and health needs.

Aboriginal people have allowed the federal government to treat funding for economic development as a "discretionary" expenditure. This has been a significant barrier to economic progress. A full 96 per cent of federal expenditures on Aboriginal people are directed toward social spending and only 4 per cent on economic development, a formula that has not been successful in reducing economic disparities between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

Entrepreneurship is not about race, and there is nothing inherently contradictory about the pursuit of business opportunities and cultural values and traditions. Economic and business development can be achieved and contribute to the preservation of culture. First Nations, Métis and Inuit people need to look beyond their communities for opportunity and engage with other business leaders (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal), asserting an inherent right to be actively involved in the economic life of their region.

Bill Lyall

Co-operatives were one of the first locally owned and locally controlled enterprises set up in the North. The first community-owned co-ops in the Arctic were incorporated in 1959. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, many other communities developed their own local co-ops.

Effective co-operative movements are typically about more than local co-operatives; they are almost invariably organized in federations, groupings or alliances that achieve benefits of scale by working together to purchase jointly whatever goods or services they need, to collaborate in training programs, to sell collectively when it is in their interest to do so, and to lobby government when it is necessary. These coalitions are central to co-operatives achieving their full potential and to the maximization of benefits for both members and their communities.

The co-operative model has worked well in northern communities because it is consistent with a traditional way of life. Co-operatives are borne from the need for self help, self-responsibility and community solidarity. Co-operative development, since it is community-based, also has the advantage of avoiding the undue influences of external investors.

Very early on, co-op leaders began to explore ways of expanding this new economic strength. Economic strength gained by pooling resources and working collaboratively at the local level was expanded to include a pooling of resources on a regional and territorial basis.

Pat Turner

First Nations, Métis and Inuit people must do more to educate the non-Aboriginal population about the role of Aboriginal business in the economies of their respective province, territory and region. From her own experiences in Manitoba, there appears to be a limited awareness of the contribution or economic momentum provided by Aboriginal entrepreneurs to the economy of Manitoba. The onus in the presentation was on Aboriginal business leaders actively engaging non-Aboriginal businesses and pursuing external partnerships and opportunities.

Of primary importance is identifying market opportunities based on the advantages of the community (location, natural and human resources) and developing a business model that fits that community. Small businesses are a crucial part of a community's economy. One or two employees may seem insignificant in comparison to urban enterprises, but in small towns, those few employees represent families that have a better chance for a positive future and represent paycheques that are spent in other local businesses.

The creation of the Manitoba Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce – the first of its kind in Canada – will help to promote and strengthen Aboriginal business throughout Manitoba, raise their profile, and encourage new partnerships between both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal companies. The Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce provides Aboriginal entrepreneurs with opportunities for networking and encouraging growth and diversity within the business community.

3.3 Workshops and Presentations

Workshops featured prominent sectors in which examples of First Nations-, Métis- and Inuit-owned businesses and joint ventures were highlighted. A major focus was on strategic partnerships within different sectors.

Information Technology

Technology helps to balance advantages between rural and urban centres and allows Aboriginal communities and business ventures to compete globally. Also highlighted in the presentations were opportunities for advancing indigenous culture, promoting Aboriginal communities, and connecting with government and private industry. Information technology provides First Nations, Métis and Inuit youth, particularly those in rural and remote locations, with opportunities for learning comparable to those found in urban settings. The session highlighted opportunities for distance learning such as "MMF Online Tutors" established by the Manitoba Métis Federation, which allows students to anonymously log-on to get assistance and encouragement from tutors.

Presenters spoke to the need for Aboriginal people to be more creative and forward- thinking in joining the mainstream economy and participating in businesses associated with information technology solutions. However, challenges remain. Morning Star Technologies has encountered various challenges in introducing technology into Aboriginal communities. The infrastructure necessary to take advantage of the technology has not yet been developed in smaller communities. There are also few role models in Aboriginal communities to promote and encourage young people to enter the technology field.

Housing as an Economic Generator

Featured in the presentations were South Beach Homes and the Anishinabek Nation of Northern Ontario. South Beach Homes, a subsidiary of Montreal Lake Development Corporation (MLDC), has been building high-quality, Ready-to-Move (RTM) homes for the past 20 years. The Anishinabek Nation's 10-year economic plan includes a strategy for increasing housing construction as part of its long-term economic future.

Estimates by the Assembly of First Nations predict a shortage in housing of about 80,000 units, worth an estimated $9.6 billion in housing construction. This impending shortage requires a broad strategy. While there will still be a need for social housing, partly filled through treaty obligations, too much money is required to address the housing gap to rely solely

on funding by government. At least 50 per cent of the economic opportunity arising from the housing shortage should be in First Nations hands. Gaining access to the necessary capital is major hurdle for First Nations to overcome in order to address the impending demand and take advantage of the opportunities presented in the housing sector.

MLDC, formed in 1981, struggled initially with few successful divisions, was plagued by a chronic lack of capital, and suffered from a lack of independence from the band council. South Beach Homes was a notable exception among MLDC ventures, and this can be traced to successful partnerships that made good use of non-First Nations expertise in the housing sector. Additionally, moving its operations off-reserve has made South Beach more accessible to customers, and volumes have increased to the extent that it has allowed MLDC to pursue other construction-related opportunities (including a possible partnership in a housing project in Ontario) and other housing-related spinoff ventures.

Innovative Partnerships in Banking

The First Nations Bank of Canada is a full-service institution developed by Aboriginal people for Aboriginal people. The First Nations Bank of Canada has responded to the financial needs of First Nations people that were not being met by the mainstream financial services sector. The bank's strategy was to align the interest of the bank to its shareholders and its customers, and to be active in the long-term economic development aspirations of First Nations communities.

Also highlighted in the workshop were the efforts by the Royal Bank of Canada (RBC), via "agency banking," to provide access to financial institutions through partnerships with Aboriginal communities and local entrepreneurs to design and deliver services. Agency banking partnerships with Aboriginal communities and entrepreneurs extended banking services and left control over the delivery of those services in the hands of the community.

A theme common to both of the presentations, presenters spoke of developing the necessary skill sets and employing local people as an important factor in their respective successes. In both presentations, partnerships were developed with universities and community colleges to recruit Aboriginal people into the sector. RBC sponsors the Aboriginal Stay in School (ASIS) Program, a program to encourage youth to attain the education needed to succeed in their chosen career. Young people can earn and learn at the Royal Bank, with many continuing their employment with RBC while completing high school and university.

Aboriginal Forestry – What is Required for Success?

The National Aboriginal Forestry Association (NAFA) is a non-profit association that provides policy analysis, research, advocacy and support to the Aboriginal forestry industry. During the course of the presentation, workshop participants heard some of the ongoing challenges still faced by the forestry sector. Among these were forest management and, more specifically, the lack of appropriate mechanisms for engaging in "rights based" tenure relationships, neither of which are adequately dealt with under the *Indian Act*. Participation in this sector requires Aboriginal communities to conform to rules developed and established without their input.

Also highlighted in the session were: the NorSask Sawmill, owned and operated by the Meadow Lake Tribal Council (MLTC); Mistik Management Ltd., a woodlands management company providing timber procurement and forestry services to NorSask Forest Products; and Meadow Lake Mechanical Pulp. Mistik is dedicated to the sustainable use and stewardship of 1.8 million hectares of boreal forest in northwest Saskatchewan.

The presentation by Mickey Werstuik (Westbank First Nation) spoke to a number of issues related to rights and title in the forestry sector. A number of barriers to addressing Aboriginal

and treaty rights still exist, including the absence of inter-jurisdictional arrangements and institutions, collective vs. individual rights, human and financial capacity, and resource revenue benefit-sharing. Clarification of these outstanding issues would pave the way for the development of more effective forestry initiatives.

Tourism

Aboriginal Tourism Canada (ATC) is a partnership of business and government whose purpose is to create opportunities for the growth of Aboriginal tourism. One of the ways this is achieved is through support for Regional Aboriginal Tourism Associations (RATAs). The main message of the presentation was that while continued government investment in RATAs is encouraged, the ultimate goal is to reduce dependency on government funding. Industry self-sufficiency will depend on partnerships with the private sector.

The efforts of one RATA, the Aboriginal Tourism Association of BC (ATBC) and its work on an *Aboriginal Cultural Blueprint Strategy for BC*, were featured in a presentation by Brenda Baptiste. Primary strategies for the Aboriginal tourism industry include fostering industry and organizational sustainability, unifying the tourism industry through partnerships among communities, and building capacity to allow expansion from community-based ventures to regionally based ones to take advantage of opportunities such as the Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

A major theme of the workshop stressed that Aboriginal tourism is more than just economic development; it is also a means of preserving and promoting indigenous culture and traditions. Major challenges to development in the tourism sector include the lack of necessary infrastructure, market development and market research capacity. By comparison to the mainstream tourism industry in Canada, the estimate is that Aboriginal tourism is decades behind in terms of the necessary infrastructure.

Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce

The main theme of the presentations focused on the growth of Aboriginal business and the need to champion economic development through viable institutions like the Manitoba Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce. The Manitoba Chamber of Commerce is an important partner in efforts to promote and lobby on behalf of the Manitoba Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce.

In his presentation, Ron Rivard outlined the efforts in Saskatchewan to establish a viable Aboriginal chamber. While the effort to establish an Aboriginal chamber of commerce in Saskatchewan ultimately proved unsuccessful, the experience of this attempt provided a number of lessons. It is important that members see the benefits of participation and share a sense of belonging within such associations. They need to effectively engage the broader business community and ensure a broad base of support from representatives of Aboriginal communities and economic development groups. There were positive results to be drawn from the Saskatchewan example: some significant partnerships were established with the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan Transportation Company and a number of private sector enterprises.

Finding Opportunities with Renewable and Non-Renewable Resources

Presentations in this workshop focused on community involvement in the development of renewable and non-renewable resources. Drew Hill spoke about a holistic approach that is the hallmark of Aboriginal business with its focus on the goal of broad-based community development and connecting business with community needs and special circumstances.

The inclusion of northern residents in the development of uranium deposits in Northern Saskatchewan was initially a condition of Cameco's Crown lease. Now community engagement and social responsibility have become important aspects of the business case for Cameco operations. Cameco's relationship with northern communities has proven successful, with Aboriginal people now comprising 50 per cent of Cameco's workforce. Additionally, 85 per cent of Cameco's purchasing is carried out in the North. Important indications of economic development, including the growth of Aboriginal-controlled secondary industries (NRT Trucking, construction firms), have resulted from Cameco's operations.

Transportation

Successful examples of Aboriginal business ventures in the transportation sector included the Northern Quebec Cree Nation's ownership and operation of Air Creebec, and Kocsis Transport's contribution to the business and employment sectors in Saskatoon and surrounding areas.

Part of the impetus for Air Creebec was borne of necessity: connecting eight Cree communities across 144,000 square miles of territory with few or no roads and a small population. The experience of the Northern Quebec Cree Nation highlighted a number of important themes, such as the importance of developing the necessary infrastructure for business growth, the importance of capitalizing on opportunities based on community needs and the necessity of strategic partnerships as a means of market access. The Northern Quebec Cree Nation and the federal government partnered in an airport development program. They also partnered with an existing air transportation firm to gain access to the market before assuming full operation.

The presentation by Ron Kocsis focused on some of the challenges in the transportation sector. Labour shortages have proven problematic in a sector that is labour intensive. Labour accounts for 50 per cent of Kocsis Transport's business costs. Better education and training was singled out as a necessity in generating employment opportunities for indigenous people. Education and training is not simply about developing an Aboriginal labour force, but about providing opportunities for, and encouraging the development of, First Nations, Métis and Inuit entrepreneurs.

Enabling Partnerships and Policies

On the basis of a successful micro-hydro and co-generation project, the Hupacasath First Nation has developed a number of partnerships with the City of Port Alberni. The Pic River First Nation developed three different micro-hydro projects in Ontario on traditional lands. These projects have allowed the surrounding communities to generate their own power source and become more economically self-sufficient.

Joint ventures between the Hupacasath First Nation and the City of Port Alberni include initiatives in co-generation of energy (small-scale hydro projects), community forestry, regional water/sewer utilities, tourism (based on Hupacasath arts, culture and history), and sports and recreation (the two communities co-sponsored the BC Winter Games and co-sponsor the annual Choo Kwa Challenge canoe race).

In both examples, these partnerships and their respective projects were accomplished while respecting cultural values, such as maintaining ties to traditional territories, sustainable resource management and showing respect for the Earth. Hupacasath First Nation has maintained strict guidelines over land usage. For the Pic River First Nation, profits generated from the hydro projects were re-invested back into their community for building a Youth Centre, a Holistic Healing Centre and providing high speed Internet and cable to all households.

Both presentations spoke to the importance of involving the Aboriginal community early in the business development process. In both examples, the water and power policies reflected the needs of those most affected by development. Another important message was to ensure that there are ongoing opportunities for the Aboriginal community to benefit as developers, partners or beneficiaries (where appropriate).

CHAPTER 4:
WHAT'S MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN TRAINING, SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND LABOUR MARKET DEVELOPMENT

4.1 Background

The session explored approaches to skills training and labour market development that have delivered results. Some of the key factors behind successful labour market outcomes were explored.

4.2 Panel Presentations

Anne Noonan

The Aboriginal Human Resource Council (AHRC) is a national non-profit organization that specializes in the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal people in the workforce. AHRC works closely with employers and Aboriginal organizations to develop new approaches to recruitment and retention issues. One of the more successful programs that the organization launched last year is called Workforce Connex, a national forum series. The program has brought together representatives from over 500 employers, First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities, post-secondary institutions, organized labour, governments and other groups to focus on ways that employers can benefit from a diverse workforce.

These events have attracted companies that are new to the targeted recruitment of Aboriginal people in order to share best practices with firms that have had success in this area. The presentation highlighted the importance of developing venues where businesses and indigenous people can learn about one another. Both benefit from a neutral middle ground where they can develop relationships and begin sowing the seeds of a strategy that results in the creation of a diverse workforce that meets the demands of industries feeling the squeeze of the skills shortage. This requires close co-ordination between two levels of government, industry, Aboriginal organizations, education, labour and non-government organizations.

Len Flett

The National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation (NAAF) is a nationally registered non-profit organization dedicated to raising funds to deliver programs that provide the tools necessary for First Nations, Métis and Inuit youth to realize their potential.

The Aboriginal population currently has a student population with a drop-out rate of 70 per cent. Predictions are that by 2010, there will be a shortage of one million people in the Canadian labour force. Also by 2010, predictions are that the Aboriginal population in Canada will have increased to 2 million. These projections provide ample demographic evidence for the Aboriginal population as a source of labour force growth in the future.

NAAF has positioned itself as a major link connecting corporate Canada and the public sector to Aboriginal youth by providing role models and mentors, educational support and other career advancement mechanisms. NAAF programs are encouraging youth to stay in school and enter into higher education and training.

Elson McDougald

Calgary-based Western Lakota began operations in 2001 with a small number of drilling rigs, working on contract for EnCana Corporation of Calgary. Western Lakota now operates nine of its 13 oilrigs in partnership with First Nation and Métis communities. It is in negotiations with other communities in Alberta and British Columbia and hopes to develop partnerships in Saskatchewan.

The oil drilling company completed its first partnership with the Dene Tha First Nation of northern Alberta in the spring of 2002. The Dene Tha First Nation acquired a 50 per cent

interest in two rigs. A third rig was sold to the Métis Nation of Alberta. Western Lakota operates and manages the rigs on behalf of the communities and employs a significant number of Aboriginal workers. Western Lakota also provides drilling rig simulators that it uses to provide training to Aboriginal communities.

In the case of First Nations, many had no capital but did have access to oil and gas deposits that were leveraged to generate capital. Western Lakota began these partnerships without any knowledge of the First Nations communities they were involved with, but within five years had established a process for pursuing these types of partnerships. Aboriginal communities in these partnerships get a stable and secure investment, cash flow, equipment, training and skills.

4.3 Workshops and Presentations

In the session on *What's Making a Difference in Training, Skills Development and Labour Market Development*, the workshops featured presentations that examined different approaches or strategies that have had produced positive results in First Nations, Métis and Inuit skills and labour market development.

Governance, Business Development and Human Resources
Allan Luby's presentation focused on the importance of leadership, noting that communities with consistent leadership are more likely to succeed. His presentation focused on First Nations' right to self-governance. The *Indian Act* does not mandate community accountability and, therefore, First Nations need to develop and use their own internal accountability systems. The Ochiichagwe'Babigo'Ining Ojibway Nation of Ontario is an example: the reforms the community enacted led to the development of the "Customary Council," which was designed to provide a better balance between elected representatives and the community at large.

Aboriginal Workforce Participation Initiative (AWPI)
The AWPI is connected to several organizations with informal agreements to recruit, retain and develop Aboriginal employees. The presentation stressed that companies must be proactive in working with local Aboriginal networks to maximize employment opportunities. Also raised in the presentations was the Aboriginal Employment Development Program (AEDP) in Saskatchewan, which was designed to take a multilateral, proactive, integrated and focused approach to promote training and employment.

Aboriginal-Controlled Training Institutions: The Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies (SIIT) and Gabriel Dumont Institute (GDI) Models
GDI was established in 1976 as a Métis-controlled educational institute. The institute is fully accredited and operates through partnerships with other degree or certificate granting post-secondary institutions in Saskatchewan. GDI programs include the Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP), the only Métis teacher training program in Canada. Other GDI services are provided via Gabriel Dumont College (which provides 1st and 2nd year arts and science transfers), Dumont Technical Institute (which is affiliated with the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) and GDI Training and Employment Services, funded through the Aboriginal Human Resources Development Association (AHRDA) to assist students in their education by providing financial assistance, career guidance and placement services.

SIIT was established in 1976 as a community college focused on meeting First Nations needs through adult basic education programs, as well as technical and vocational training. SIIT is the largest First Nations post-secondary technical training institution in Canada. It provides program delivery through nine sites across Saskatchewan and is directly operated by the Board of Governors of the FSIN. SIIT has proven successful at developing partnerships with industry to improve the linkage between training and employment. It is currently developing initiatives with international corporations such as Boeing and Rockwell Collins, and is focused on greater growth and diversification through its Department of Institutional Advancement.

An example of the linkages between these Aboriginal-controlled institutions and industry was highlighted in the presentation by Dona Desmarais on SaskEnergy's efforts at workplace renewal through succession planning involving both GDI and SIIT.

Youth Entrepreneurship
The main themes of the presentation in this workshop stressed self-reliance and individual achievement as the basis of the entrepreneurial spirit. At the same time, however, access to

the experience of other entrepreneurs is a key to success in the developmental phase of young entrepreneurs. Education is another important ingredient for young entrepreneurs whether formal or gained in the labour force.

Youth entrepreneurs should have a focus on long-term goals but remember to monitor progress on a consistent basis and set short-term objectives along the way. Another key to success involves developing good practices in employee relations by ensuring that employees are involved and provided with an awareness of the business and a stake in its success. The recruitment of skilled people, the need to actively network with other entrepreneurs and offering mentorship to others were also highlighted in the presentation.

The Aboriginal Employment Development Program (AEDP) and the Aboriginal Representative Workforce Strategy

On December 6, 2006, the Government of Saskatchewan passed legislation establishing the Saskatchewan Labour Market Council with representatives from business, labour and training institutions. Business and labour each appoint five representatives, one of whom must be Aboriginal. A focus of the council will be to identify ways to increase Aboriginal participation in the workforce. Part of this process will require discussion of an actual strategy rather than just identifying best practices. It is important that barriers to Aboriginal participation are removed rather than merely setting quotas.

Saskatchewan has 72 partnership agreements through the AEDP, which has resulted in the hiring of 3,000 new Aboriginal staff, mostly in permanent positions. The AEDP program is "merit driven." When an employer signs a partnership agreement, a generic audit is completed to determine the credentials required for each position. This information is passed on to Aboriginal communities and training institutions to better link education and training to specific labour market demands and thereby compete on a level playing field.

Role of Media and Communications

Presentations in this workshop focused on the role of the Aboriginal media. *SAY Magazine* is a lifestyle publication, targeted at First Nations, Métis and Inuit youth, which publishes nationally but also provides regionally specific content. *SAY Magazine* publishes special editions highlighting best practices in economic development geared to informing and educating youth. At the same time, *SAY* provides industry/businesses with a perspective on the potential of Aboriginal youth. In part, the role of *SAY* is to appropriately market Aboriginal youth to the mainstream business community while, at the same time, promoting the participation of Aboriginal youth in business and industry.

The Aboriginal Times is a national news and business publication with a focus on providing a more objective portrayal of indigenous people. *The Aboriginal Times* has assumed a lead role in ensuring that Aboriginal people have access to media and information that reflects an Aboriginal perspective. The mandate of the magazine was essentially borne out of the need for an unbiased and more positive portrayal of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people in mainstream Canadian media.

The Role of Co-operatives in Aboriginal Economic Development

Co-operatives grow out of community needs and are community-controlled. This concern for the community governs the direction of the co-operatives. They have proven appealing in instances in which communities have felt that they are not well served by either the public or private sectors. This has proven to be particularly true in the North, where co-operatives have provided a boost to economic development activity in a region of Canada dominated by the public sector (federal government) rather than the private sector.

The majority of co-operatives are consumer-based, but branch into a wide variety of activities such as tourism, construction and communications. A co-operative model could potentially be expanded into other activities such as finance and resource industries. A successful non-consumer based application of such a co-operative model is the First Nations Agricultural Council of Saskatchewan Inc. (FNACS), which is designed to develop a strong, viable and sustainable agricultural sector for Aboriginal farmers and communities. The council delivers a number of programs to provide expertise to Aboriginal farmers on environmental and land management planning. The Canadian Agricultural Skills Service helps to develop the farming, business and entrepreneurial skills of Aboriginal farmers. The co-operative experience in many communities has provided benefits other than fostering economic development. Co-operatives have benefited communities by providing services that might not otherwise exist and, therefore, have helped to build physical and social infrastructure. For example, co-operatives have begun to deliver services like waste and sewage treatment and fuel delivery in the North. They have contributed to the early development of many Aboriginal political leaders. For example, many current Inuit leaders are former co-operative employees. Community-based and community-operated co-operatives are also a source of local pride and social cohesion.

CHAPTER 5:
THEMES FROM THE WORKSHOP DISCUSSIONS

5.1 Background

The workshops were designed to engage participants in a dialogue around the main objectives of the symposium. To help promote discussion, background materials and a set of directed questions specific to each of the three main symposium sessions were provided in the workshop discussion guide (see Appendix B).

For the session workshops under *Challenge, Change and Development: Strategies for Success*, the guide provided a brief demographic and economic profile of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people in Canada. This was followed by a sampling of some broad themes explored in academic research, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples and other publications into the types of barriers, challenges and enablers to economic development experienced by First Nation, Métis and Inuit communities and businesses. Participants in the workshop were then asked a variety of questions meant to help define successful Aboriginal economic development by identifying examples of policies and initiatives that have led to success, the individual factors or conditions deemed necessary to those successes, and what could be done differently, and by whom, to achieve more widespread economic success.

Background information provided for the session on *Maximizing Opportunities in Strategic Sectors* included the role of particular sectors in the Canadian economy as a whole and, where applicable, participation within these sectors of the economy by Aboriginal communities and businesses. Most importantly, it provided examples of successful ventures from across Canada. Questions in the workshop focused on identifying those sectors that provided the best opportunities for Aboriginal economic development, the conditions for success, the role of strategic partnerships and what could be done differently to increase First Nations, Métis and Inuit participation in particular sectors of the economy.

In the last session on *What's Making a Difference in Training, Skills Development and Labour Market Development*, material provided in the guide examined educational and labour market trends among indigenous people, followed by a brief set of examples of innovative programs and initiatives aimed at improving participation in education and employment. The workshops posed the question of what can be done differently to increase education, training and skills development, as well as how to improve employment opportunities (including retention and advancement) for indigenous people.

Presented below are a number of recurrent themes raised during the course of the symposium workshops.

5.2 Themes from the Workshops

Aboriginal Definition of Success

Some Aboriginal communities implement their development strategies simply by "learning and doing" business largely in the context of the mainstream economy. Other communities, however, find it difficult to comply with the terms and conditions of the mainstream economy because of the need to sacrifice traditions and political institutions in order to fully participate. Successful Aboriginal economic development often has more of an emphasis on social development and is more connected to the community. Further, the definition of community is not just a community or a reserve, but can also be regional in scope.

Economic development projects must consider not only easily quantifiable costs, but also the costs to the environment, people, communities and future generations. As such, there are differences in the manner in which the community is factored into economic development. In many instances, participants spoke to the need for planned economic development to be balanced with preserving cultural values and traditions. In

Opening the Toolbox for Aboriginal Women, successful economic development is tied to social and cultural well-being. This ranges from issues such as life skills, self-esteem, access to education and training, to child or elder care. Without these basic supports, Aboriginal women are not likely to be able to initiate, successfully implement or benefit from any economic development opportunities.

An underlying theme of the sectoral discussions was the importance of accommodating First Nations, Métis and Inuit definitions of success with those of mainstream business culture. Individual success, communicating success and self-promotion – something considered valuable in the mainstream non-Aboriginal business community – were not traits normally valued by Aboriginal people. In fact, at times success was said to be a point of contention within communities. There was also said to be a strong element of a 'fear of success' and 'fear of money' among people who have been economically marginalized for so long. Aboriginal people need to become less averse to the notion of risk in order to learn how to be entrepreneurs and develop a mindset consistent with that of their non-Aboriginal counterparts, including celebrating success.

Aboriginal people continue to experience difficulty overcoming negative perceptions when doing business in the non-Aboriginal community. Participants in the workshops suggested that Aboriginal business people are not perceived as sharing the same drive, commitment and skills as their non-Aboriginal counterparts in the mainstream business community. First Nations, Métis and Inuit people need to get success stories out and be more active self-promoters. A positive example raised in the housing workshop was the Ontario Technical Services Corporation Awards, which provide recognition of youth in technical fields (especially engineers). Greater effort needs to be put into the promotion of success stories nationally as models of economic development success, particularly communities such as the Osoyoos and Whitecap First Nations.

Aboriginal Culture

Cultural differences often have an effect on potential opportunities for economic development because of traditional values such as environmental sustainability, preferences for green forms of energy generation, eco-tourism and cultural tourism. Often the pursuit of economic development opportunities are met with concern, particularly with ventures that run counter to perceived traditional land uses or cultural values. A notable exception is tourism, where the desire to make the most of cultural opportunities and promote First Nations, Métis and Inuit culture is at times in sharp contrast to the handling of the issue of cultural values and traditions expressed elsewhere. Many of the symptoms of long-term poverty are confused with indigenous people's culture, such as a poor work ethic, being late, absenteeism, a poor fit with mainstream culture, etc. Government agencies, employers and non-profit service agencies need to understand that the culture of poverty is different from Aboriginal culture. Additionally, the mainstream workforce is still not accepting of First Nations, Métis or Inuit people, leading to poor retention in employment. Creating cultural awareness programs rarely creates a welcoming atmosphere in the workplace – it sometimes only reinforces the stereotypes about differences. Anti-racism training needs to address the attitudes and values of the dominant (white, European) society, rather than emphasizing Aboriginal culture. This may improve with greater percentages of Aboriginal people working at all levels within an organization.

Community-Based Planning

In many instances during the workshops, the ability of Aboriginal communities to exert greater control over their own communities was identified as an important component of economic development strategies. This was often characterized more holistically as a "community development plan" rather than a strictly economic development plan. The fundamental concern put forward by the *Harvard Project* is that Aboriginal communities focus too much on the actual development instead of creating the environment, political and economic institutions and appropriate development strategies. This was echoed consistently in the workshops, with an emphasis on the need for

long-term, strategic, community planning processes. At the same time, however, workshop participants frequently noted that in reality most communities don't have a community development plan. Typically, communities have focused on specific projects rather than melding projects to the larger goal of sustainable communities. In many instances, the selection of short-term strategies over long-term sustainability was

viewed in discussions as a function of the political environment, whether often as a result of changes at the federal government or the local government level.

A key to successful economic development is the identification of what can be described as natural competitive advantages. In short, participants (especially in the transportation, housing, renewable and non-renewable resources and tourism sectoral workshops) pointed to the importance of location, product identification, access to expertise and labour markets. Aboriginal communities and businesses need to "take inventory" of opportunities in order to assess those offering the greatest returns. More emphasis was needed to identify opportunities based on an understanding of a community's capacity and location.

The need for long-range, strategic planning processes was a theme cutting across all sectors and was closely associated to the identification of appropriate economic development opportunities. Sustainability depends on long-range planning and consistent leadership devoted to a well-devised economic development program. Key elements of long-term strategic planning processes included taking into account infrastructure, training, employment opportunities, economic growth, capacity and revenue generation. Yet there was also an acknowledgement that in real terms there has not been a sufficient commitment on the part of either government or Aboriginal communities to economic development as part of an overall commitment to community development. A statistic repeated by many of the presentations (Bernd Christmas, Chief Clarence Louie and Marty Klyne) and workshop discussions noted that only 4 per cent of federal funding is currently allocated to economic development initiatives.

Strategic Partnerships

Despite the desire to have economic development that is driven by the community, it was often noted that communities must also go outside to identify opportunities and must rely on external partners to succeed. External partnerships were fundamentally important in capacity building. These typically took several forms. Partnerships with the private sector were seen as a means of gaining access to capital, expertise, markets and skills development. Partnerships with governments (at all levels) were necessary to effect regulatory and policy change that encourages economic development (through funding or through facilitating private sector involvement). Partnerships with other Aboriginal communities, enterprises and institutions in collective and collaborative activities provide economies of scale.

In the workshop on renewable and non-renewable resources, joint ventures were identified as being important in providing access to capital, particularly with partners that maintained an equity position within the venture. In the forestry sector, the industry is dominated by large-scale corporate operations, requiring producers to operate as efficiently as possible to remain competitive. For Aboriginal communities in the forestry sector, this often requires large infusions of capital investment by major partners.

Partnerships provide access to developing markets and opportunities to develop the requisite capacity to run enterprises successfully in the future. Relationships with suppliers and contractors are also fundamentally important. In the case of Montreal Lake Development Corporation, partnerships resulted in the creation of other spinoffs related to housing (such as cabinet making, window and door fabrication ventures) in other communities that then act as suppliers to South Beach Homes. Partnerships in the hydro sector require utilities willing to purchase power generated and, as a consequence, partners need to be involved in project design, financing and delivery agreements. More generally, partners should be engaged in long-term planning processes, particularly in the case of the resource sector, where factoring in things such as mine closures and long-term diversification is required.

In addition to capital investment, joint ventures often provide benefits such as training opportunities. This was particularly true of small communities without the skilled labour force or technical knowledge to drive development. Building business partnerships, integrating First Nations, Métis and Inuit people into the workforce, and creating an equal playing field are vital to long-term, sustainable employment. A key message from the workshops was that Aboriginal business people need to be willing to go beyond the reserve or community for assistance from non-Aboriginal businesses and, conversely, non-Aboriginal business people need to be willing to partner with Aboriginal communities and businesses in skills development as part of development projects.

Public sector partnerships are important to facilitate economic development by creating the conditions for success. Government partners provide Aboriginal communities and businesses with an increased awareness of what opportunities are available and where to go for funding and, in general, can explain the "rules of the game" (including training and labour market opportunities). Governments provide the necessary policy regimes, market research, and processes for facilitating linkages between communities and investors, financial institutions, developers, customers, professionals and other required project partners. For example, in the energy sector workshop, it was suggested that governments should have a special category for engaging in joint projects with First Nations communities, especially where there is a natural fit, such as with the development of land-based or non-renewable resources on First Nations reserve or traditional lands. This was echoed in the *Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce* workshop, where it was suggested that the public sector could do more to establish objectives within government to do a certain portion of their business (e.g. 5 per cent or 10 per cent) with Aboriginal organizations.

Partnerships with other communities are important, and participants spoke to the need for greater commitment on the part of Aboriginal communities and businesses to plan collective ventures, employ other Aboriginal enterprises and encourage "buy Aboriginal" policies. Partnerships between training institutions, employment agencies and employers need to be encouraged. One example of such a partnership is the Construction Careers program involving the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies (SIIT), the Saskatchewan Construction Association and employers in the construction sector with locations for training in Regina, Saskatoon and Prince Albert.

Leadership

Ineffective political institutional structures have led to accusations of nepotism, patronage and politicized management, and are barriers to carrying out effective economic development. Another criticism is that many economic development programs target the elite in the community and do not filter down to create a culture of success throughout the community. Participants spoke of the need to establish rules to make a clear separation between business and politics. Economic development bodies should be independent of political processes and have their own mandate.

Economic development needs to be driven by the community at large and not simply by the political leadership. Participants spoke of the need for community-driven decision-making through a consultative process. Good leadership was often closely associated with a meaningful duty to consult, engage, and be open and accountable, thereby enlisting the full support and commitment of the community to the larger economic development plan.

Governance and Accountability

Indigenous people are often not on an equal footing with non-Aboriginals when seeking to take advantage of economic development opportunities because much of the necessary decision-making authority resides outside of Aboriginal communities and leadership. They are also disadvantaged by a dependency on other governments and a perceived culture of entitlement that runs counter to greater self-reliance and self-determination.

Clearly defined jurisdictional roles and a legal basis for self-determination are a prerequisite for enabling the economic development goals of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people. This was expressed in a number of different ways, most commonly in relation to the issue of land entitlement. Control over land and natural resources by Aboriginal communities

was often synonymous with self-determination and the ability to pursue economic development objectives. Without clear entitlement and control over resources, Aboriginal communities were at a distinct disadvantage in terms of land use and revenue sharing, both of which are critical to the pursuit of economic development strategies. The relationship between First Nations and the Yukon government was held up as an ideal model. First Nations in the Yukon have a self-government agreement, but continue to work in partnership with other governments to achieve successful economic development.

If a community is badly in debt, has poor financial controls, or is under third party management, any corporation, venture fund or other agency will see it as a poor risk. Greater emphasis on transparency and accountability are required in order to overcome some of the perceptions of weak management and accountability structures. Aboriginal communities and businesses need to focus on developing good business plans, including identifying support systems, financial plans, and human resource plans. This includes being able to analyze financial statements to ensure financial reporting is on track with industry standards.

Access to Financial Capital

The presence and flow of financial capital facilitates the creation of other market fundamentals, such as business development, investment and employment creation. Financial capital contributes to the "entrepreneurial spirit" of a community. The ability of grassroots people to have access to financial capital presents an opportunity to "unleash" economic activity and thus drives growth.

However, the inability to access financial resources has been repeatedly cited as an ongoing constraint on Aboriginal economic development. In many instances, communities lack equity and require more innovative solutions for leveraging necessary financing. Recurrent barriers cited in the workshops spoke of existing collateral requirements, poor credit histories and other barriers to qualifying for financing.

Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal financial institutions have developed methods to provide more access to capital for First Nations, Métis and Inuit people for economic development purposes. Aboriginal Business Canada is just one example of funding agencies that provide startup funds for business ventures.

Still, greater flexibility is required. There remain limits on personal project amounts and restrictions on required ownership percentages that limit development opportunities. Governments need to develop economic development programs specifically targeting women that will provide access to startup financing, capital development funds, bridge financing and other supports. Funding should also contribute to capacity building and training for women in personal and business development in order to ensure that the investment has the potential to succeed.

In the housing sector, greater opportunities for home ownership in Aboriginal communities are necessary, freed from existing regulations surrounding the use of housing as collateral by First Nations on-reserve. Financing of construction, therefore, often still requires bonding contractors, a solution that the Montreal Lake Cree Nation has been able to offset to some degree, but regulatory changes are needed to address the underlying problems. Housing also needs to be separated from community politics. Successful examples of this are the Cowichan Band and Montreal Lake, where there is a clear separation between the housing authority and band council.

A predominant theme in the banking sector discussion focused on reducing waiting times to increase access to loans by Aboriginal entrepreneurs. In order to improve access to financial capital, financial institutions need to look beyond the traditional requirements for banking services and acknowledge contributions to business startups by non-traditional lenders.

Education and Training

Aboriginal people historically have had low levels of workforce participation and correspondingly high unemployment rates. Many of the workshops spoke to the limits these factors have had on the development of human capital, including limited exposure to the business world and to entrepreneurs. As such, the workforce has traditionally been underdeveloped and the experience and skills that have been developed are often confined to primary industries like fishing and forestry. Participants in the workshops spoke to the relevance of education and training, but acknowledge that communities need to see greater evidence of the tangible benefits of education in advancing social and economic development. The responsibility for reversing the very low participation rate clearly rests within the community, with leaders, with parents, teachers and school boards. Institutions and governments can be part of the solution by doing more to bring training to the community, by having more flexible (mobile) programs and training initiatives brought into Aboriginal communities instead of requiring individuals to leave their homes to pursue education.

Governments need to examine the funding formulas of their education support programs to make them more effective. Federal, provincial, territorial and Aboriginal governments must share the same vision and agree on delivery mechanisms. Governments should build performance measures into the training dollars they spend. As an example of how governments might achieve better results, it was suggested that Saskatchewan Crown corporations (such as SaskPower, SaskTel and SaskEnergy) should be working with northern communities to train local residents instead of bringing employees into the communities from hundreds of kilometres away.

Labour Market Development

First Nations, Métis and Inuit youth should be made more aware of the link between educational levels and economic well-being. Participants spoke of the need to create a greater awareness among Aboriginal youth about options for jobs and careers and the appropriate education and training necessary to take advantage of labour market opportunities. This can be accomplished by having career fairs, successful young Aboriginal people as guest speakers at schools, skills assessment and employment counselling.

Education must meet the demands of the labour market by combining education and economic development with incentives for completion of training and making the transition to employment. Participants advocated for more work being done through employment agencies to ensure linkages are made between market needs and trained people. Another option was the creation of inventories on a local or regional level to identify the existing pools of skilled or trained people and the available jobs by industry and location.

There should be better co-ordination of labour market research among industry groups, employers, training institutions, and employment programs and agencies. More work needs to be done on making the link between labour market analysis and education and training programs, and these linkages need to be communicated to educational institutions, particularly schools with Aboriginal students.

Others, however, pointed out that some Aboriginal communities are often unable to provide the necessary opportunities or funding for training. On-the-job training of one to two years is needed in order to develop an employee who is fully knowledgeable about the job. Finding opportunities away from the community was often seen as a necessary step to developing human capital. Participants spoke to the need for youth to find and develop the necessary skills externally, with one First Nations community actively experimenting with a model of encouraging its people to work off-reserve.

Maintaining a trained workforce is often difficult for some communities. In several instances, participants spoke to the difficulties inherent in retaining youth. An important element of building capacity and retaining human capital is being able to provide opportunities so that trained individuals do not take their skill sets outside of the community (brain drain). Thus, while some encouraged seeking employment and business experience outside of the community, others spoke about providing incentives to bring youth back to their communities. Making students aware of future job opportunities to keep them motivated in school and creating mentorships to provide meaningful examples of success were seen as possible tools for retaining youth.

Greater efforts need to be made by industry and employers to demonstrate to the Aboriginal community the economic benefits obtained through participation in the workforce and through investing in local companies or becoming a supplier or contractor to them. Education for human resource practitioners and for senior management is needed to help companies understand the benefits of hiring and training First Nations, Métis and Inuit people.

Partnerships with industry for economic development and training have led to success in developing human capital in Aboriginal communities. More opportunities for mentoring are needed, and participants talked of the utility of mentoring as a function of government funding agencies. There is a need to educate and inform employers about the proven advantages of integrating First Nations, Métis and Inuit people into their organizations. Related to this is the need to foster examples of success and communicate those successes through job coaches, mentors, role models and others. Aboriginal communities need to enlist private enterprise in mentoring activities as part of employment and development initiatives. Chambers of commerce should be key to mentoring strategies for Aboriginal youth. Aboriginal students from northern or non-urban areas entering post-secondary education should have a paid mentor assigned to assist them – preferably an Aboriginal student with a few successful years behind him or her.

There was an emphasis placed on empowering youth by teaching business skills (e.g. self-employment skills, budgeting knowledge) including the notion that entrepreneur training

should be taught in schools as part of the core curriculum. Communities and businesses need to share more of their expertise and share best practices through institutions such as the Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce in Manitoba or the Atlantic Aboriginal Economic Developers Network. One workshop suggested the creation of an entrepreneurship institute specifically to develop young entrepreneurs. Students need the mindset to pursue entrepreneurial endeavours. Aboriginal communities need to encourage a more entrepreneurial spirit in general and find "entrepreneurial champions."

Lands and Resources

The ownership of land, control over the development that occurs on it, and ownership of its resources are considered fundamental to the desire for self-determination and self-sufficiency. However, it was clear in the presentations and in the workshop discussions that lands are also considered the "place" of the nation and are inseparable from the people and their culture. First Nations, Métis and Inuit people are creating development strategies that are based on the land and its resources. These strategies range from the industrial exploitation of resources to maintaining the land and natural environment. In both the *Forestry* and *Enabling Partnerships* workshops, this was closely associated with treaty land entitlement. On-reserve First Nations have opportunities through treaty land entitlement for land acquisition and subsequent development and management. In *Enabling Partnerships*, participants suggested that treaty land entitlement processes should be directly tied to economic development.

Land entitlement, resource control and ownership potentially create opportunities, but this also poses some unique difficulties for indigenous businesses in economic development. Participants spoke of the need to make natural resource control part of the economic development agenda. Others spoke to the need for Aboriginal people to be positioned to take advantage of resource opportunities like uranium and oil. In contrast, others spoke to the need to preserve and manage progress and to respect traditional values of protecting and sustaining the environment. In *Opening the Toolbox for Inuit Economic Development*, the emphasis was on the North as a "last frontier" and with pursuing economic development within environmental limits. Caution needs to be exercised with respect to the "mega projects mentality," which often runs counter to sustainable long-term development and self-reliance. Mega projects and a reliance on non-renewable resource extraction are often short-term, have environmental impacts and run counter to traditional land use.

There are differences between successful economic development and successful *community* economic development, and often the latter involves appropriate land use planning in the definition of success. Without infrastructure, there is no foundation for building economic and business development, and this must be done strategically and with an eye to long-term sustainability. Many Aboriginal communities were said to be ill-prepared or lack an understanding of land use, including the necessary infrastructure and decision-making ability about residential and industrial zoning.

The importance of infrastructure as either a potential enabler or impediment to economic development was raised in a number of workshops. In Nunavut, mining, tourism, and arts and crafts sectors are being developed, but a lack of infrastructure (roads, airports, docks, etc.) impedes development and business sustainability. In contrast, the experience of Kahnawake Mohawk Internet Technologies (MIT) of Quebec is an example of how an Aboriginal community took advantage of existing infrastructure to establish itself as an Internet service provider. Another prominent example was that of the Westbank First Nation land development. Westbank administers lands designated under a 99-year land use agreement and develops land codes, regulates zoning, implements environmental laws and policies, and negotiates binding agreements. The band does utility expansions and home construction and collects property taxes for land it has developed.

Not surprisingly, land and resource issues figure prominently among the factors enabling successful economic development in such sectors as renewable and non-renewable resources, energy, forestry and housing. These are economic sectors that allow Aboriginal communities to develop land-based resources that reflect traditional land uses and values about sustainable development and environmentally friendly practices. Traditional land use and sustainable, low-impact development projects figured prominently in the workshops on energy and resources, highlighting the importance of environmental issues as an area in which Aboriginal communities were especially well placed.

CHAPTER 6:
SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

The symposium's main purpose was to celebrate successful economic development efforts by First Nations, Métis and Inuit people and through these successes draw lessons, share best practices, and move toward achieving greater and more universal prosperity for Aboriginal people. Throughout, the presentations and workshop discussions explored the factors deemed most critical to successful Aboriginal economic development and began a process of articulating these and perhaps creating a pathway for finding solutions to ongoing challenges. This report is meant to record the efforts of those who took part in the symposium and is their roadmap for successful and sustainable Aboriginal economic development and the meaningful inclusion of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people in an increasingly prosperous Canada. The overview of the predominant themes emerging from the symposium provides the context for ways to move forward.

Many of the examples of successful Aboriginal economic development strategies are those that have not attempted to impose strategies employed in the non-Aboriginal mainstream but are unique to these communities or business ventures. Successful strategies, illustrated in presentations and in workshop discussions, often placed a greater emphasis on and were more connected to the community. Dr. Wuttunee spoke of communities that have been successful practitioners of what she described as "community capitalism." Aboriginal economic development was frequently connected to the broader concept of community development, incorporating aspects of both social and economic development.

Aboriginal participation in the Canadian economy is the most promising path towards promoting self-sufficiency and reducing the dependency of Aboriginal people on government funding and, therefore, governments clearly have a role to play and an interest in identifying and creating opportunities.

1. *The government should develop an integrated policy framework for Aboriginal economic development that favours "opportunity-based" programming, contributes to sustainable economic and business development, and is responsive to First Nations (off-reserve and on-reserve), Métis and Inuit challenges and opportunities.*

In the search for economic development opportunities, it is important that the opportunity is an appropriate fit with the values and long-term sustainability of communities. An important and recurrent theme was that First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities need to better identify opportunities based on the advantages of the community (location, natural and human resources) and develop a business model that fits the community.

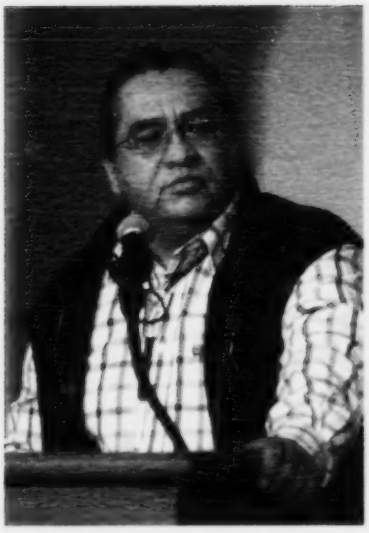
2. *Aboriginal communities and businesses need to "take inventory" of opportunities to assess those offering the greatest returns. This means identifying opportunities based on an understanding of each community's capacity and location.*

Throughout the symposium, there was a focus on long-range, strategic, community-based planning processes designed to identify not only sustainable economic development opportunities, but appropriate opportunities that contribute to social development, respect culture and tradition, and advance the long-term aspirations of communities for self-determination.

Strategic, long-term, community-based planning processes, however, often fall short where Aboriginal communities do not have sufficient control over their own institutions, regulatory instruments, lands, resources and/or revenues, all of which are viewed as the necessary prerequisites for enabling the economic development goals of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people.

In the presentation by Dr. Manley A. Begay Jr., he asks the question: "Why have some indigenous communities demonstrated better success than others in building sustainable economies?" Successful indigenous communities assert the right to govern, and exercise that right effectively by building capable governing institutions that match their cultures. Economic development is part of a process Dr. Begay describes as "nation-building." Aboriginal communities need to have the institutions of government and the management capacity that will allow them to guide successful development. Capable governing institutions provide a clear separation of politics from day-to-day business and program management. By adopting appropriate laws, codes and procedures, the process of governing is transparent.

As Dr. Begay observes, in the absence of self-determination and the appropriate institutions of government, communities have often pursued short-term economic development strategies over sustainable, long-term strategies in part as a function of the



political environment, whether as a result of changes at the federal government level or the local government level. Such strategies are often plagued by dependence on the federal government and chasing grants, and with citizen dependence on Aboriginal governments where access to jobs and resources is heavily politicized. Sustainability depends on long-range planning and consistent leadership devoted to a well-devised economic development program. In the Youth Forum, delegates spoke of the need for a clear separation between politics and business in Aboriginal communities in order to improve transparency and accountability.

3. *Governments and the Aboriginal leadership must continue to clarify jurisdictional roles and provide a legal basis for self-determination to allow Aboriginal communities to fully pursue economic development opportunities.*

4. *Aboriginal leaders need to ensure that economic development opportunities have the full support of citizens by pursuing community-driven decision-making through a meaningful duty to consult.*

5. *To improve transparency, economic development bodies should be independent of political processes and have their own mandates.*

6. *Aboriginal communities and businesses need to focus on long-range, strategic planning processes by developing good business plans, including identifying support systems, financial (including appropriate reporting mechanisms), human resource and infrastructure plans.*

Throughout the symposium, examples of communities and regions that are economically strong also had better health, better participation rates in education, the most acceptable housing, and the strongest and most sustainable cultures. The creation of economic opportunities, the generation of wealth, and full participation in the labour market have done more to advance social development in some Aboriginal communities than reliance on government funding has been able to provide for others. Repeated many times throughout the symposium, funding toward economic development has been crowded out in relation to funding for social development. This imbalance often ignores the reality that in non-Aboriginal communities, social development has occurred as a consequence of prosperous economies.

7. *Governments (federal, provincial and territorial) must redress the imbalance in the funding of Aboriginal programming to reflect a more holistic community development approach that does not disproportionately favour social over economic development.*

For many indigenous people, their aspirations for self-determination and self-reliance as a people and culture are inseparable and bound to the land. Meaningful control over their "place" and the ability to take meaningful control over the management of the resources and, therefore, wealth that resides on that land are fundamental to the desire for self-determination and self-sufficiency. Equally important, the right to establish development guidelines, land use policies and infrastructure planning are important elements of long-term strategic economic planning processes.

8. *Without clear entitlement and control over resources, Aboriginal communities are at a distinct disadvantage in terms of land use and revenue sharing, both critical to the pursuit of economic development strategies. Governments (federal, provincial, territorial and Aboriginal) must work to clarify development and land use rights, as well as resource benefit-sharing arrangements.*

9. *Both the federal and First Nations governments should pursue ongoing treaty land entitlement processes in a way that more directly ties them to economic development planning.*

10. *Governments must partner with Aboriginal communities to plan and develop the necessary infrastructure (transportation, communications, etc.) to pursue economic development opportunities.*

Throughout the symposium, there was an expressed desire for Aboriginal people to look beyond their own communities and actively assert themselves into the mainstream of economic life in Canada and to be actively engaged in the long-term economic planning of their regions and the country as a whole. The role of governments in policy development remains

important in order to create the conditions in which economic development opportunities can be pursued. Increasingly, however, First Nations, Métis and Inuit people look to each other and to the private sector to build meaningful partnerships. Partnerships provide access to capital, entrance into markets and opportunities for building managerial, technical and human resource capacity. Aboriginal communities and business people need to be willing to go beyond the reserve for assistance from non-Aboriginal businesses and, conversely, non-Aboriginal businesses need to be willing to partner with Aboriginal communities and businesses in development projects. A number of successful examples of small, medium and large venture partnerships between Aboriginal communities and the private sector illustrated the importance of finding mechanisms to facilitate greater engagement.

11. *Federal, provincial and territorial governments must include First Nations, Métis and Inuit in their respective long-term economic development planning processes.*

12. *Federal, provincial, territorial and Aboriginal governments need to support strategies that specifically enable First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Aboriginal women to become empowered and actively engaged in the economy.*

13. *There needs to be more mechanisms or venues, such as the AFN Corporate Challenge, to facilitate the engagement of Aboriginal communities and businesses with the private sector. Governments (federal, provincial, territorial and Aboriginal), Aboriginal communities and businesses, and private sector representatives need to work together to find opportunities for encouraging partnerships.*

Discussions regarding making education and training relevant to First Nations, Métis and Inuit youth, and thereby improving participation rates in education in Aboriginal communities, pointed to the importance of creating a greater awareness about options for jobs and careers and taking advantage of labour market opportunities. Best practices in skills, training and labour market development profiled in the symposium often involved partnerships with the public and private sector as part of specific economic development projects. Investments made to develop "social capital" have led to partnerships and private sector investment in Aboriginal employment and training. Building the necessary management, technical and entrepreneurial skills often meant looking beyond the community. In the absence of opportunities to develop human capital within the community, Aboriginal people need to actively pursue these opportunities externally. The great challenge in capacity building is in retaining skilled people and entrepreneurs capable of driving community-based economic development, and acting as mentors and role models for others.

14. *The leadership of Aboriginal communities must take the initiative do more to improve the participation rate of First Nations, Métis and Inuit youth in education.*

15. *Educational institutions, governments and Aboriginal people need to partner in developing programs to bring training to Aboriginal communities.*

Greater success in improving participation rates among Aboriginal youth is more likely to occur if education and training are more closely linked to labour market opportunities. Education and training, and the funding to support it, should be designed to reflect labour market opportunities and long-range community human resource needs in conjunction with economic development planning. More work needs to be done on making the link between labour market analysis and education and training programs, and these linkages need to be communicated to educational institutions, particularly schools with Aboriginal students.

16. *There should be better co-ordination of labour market research among industry groups, employers, training institutions, and employment programs and agencies. More work done could be done through employment agencies to ensure linkages are made between market needs and trained people.*

17. *Governments need to examine the funding formulas of their education support programs to make them more effective. Federal, provincial, territorial and Aboriginal governments must share the same vision and agree on delivery mechanisms. Governments should have performance measures built into the training dollars they spend.*

Education and training should contribute to the development of First Nations, Métis and Inuit entrepreneurs, as well as to the development of an Aboriginal labour force. Aboriginal communities need to find "entrepreneurial champions" to provide mentorship, but they also need to explore how to build in opportunities for mentoring and job coaching as part of partnerships with governments and the private sector.

18. *More opportunities for mentoring are needed, and participants talked of the utility of mentoring as a function of government funding agencies. Aboriginal communities need to enlist private enterprise in mentoring activities as part of employment and development initiatives.*

19. *Communities and businesses need to share more of their expertise and share best practices through institutions such as the Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce in Manitoba or the Atlantic Aboriginal Economic Developers Network.*

In the words of Chief Joseph, this symposium represents a crossroads. An opportunity has presented itself for a meaningful discussion about moving forward on the promise to share in the wealth and prosperity of this country, which was first articulated in the signing of the treaties, and which now extends universally to include all of Canada's indigenous people. The seed was planted during the First Ministers' Meeting in Kelowna and brought to fruition by Saskatchewan Premier Lorne Calvert. Universally, the symposium was seen as the beginning of a meaningful dialogue about Aboriginal economic development, not as an ongoing challenge – although clearly challenges remain – but as a sharing of best practices and positive examples. The results of that dialogue point to the factors and conditions that have led to successful economic development strategies for First Nations, Métis and Inuit people, but it has also made important suggestions about what next steps are required for Aboriginal communities, governments and industry to create those conditions. Progress on these needs to be measured and the dialogue that was begun in Saskatoon needs to continue.

20. *A follow-up symposium on Aboriginal economic development should be convened by the leaders of Aboriginal organizations in conjunction with government and private industry to measure progress and continue to disseminate best practices and celebrate successful First Nations, Métis and Inuit economic development.*

APPENDIX A: YOUTH FORUM

A.1 Background

Following the conclusion of the National Symposium on Aboriginal Economic Development, youth delegates from across the country were invited to participate in a Youth Forum to share their unique thoughts on and experiences at the symposium. The Youth Forum was provided with a number of broad themes in order to promote discussion and reflection on what they heard over the course of symposium. Over 30 youth participated in the discussions on the following set of topics to reflect on what they thought were the highlights of the conference:

- Youth Entrepreneurship
- Community and Business Leadership
- Education for Success
- Partnership Building

A.2 Insights and Reflections

Much of the discussion from the Youth Forum and the comments that emerged from the dialogue among the delegates provided a perspective on the symposium and the role of youth, their impressions of the outcomes of the workshop discussions and the level of engagement they felt had been accomplished. While insightful, youth delegates were particularly vocal about the need for "action" and "follow-up" on the ideas and initiatives generated over the course of the symposium. They expressed a sense of empowerment and a sense of inclusion, but expressed the desire to be more actively engaged and involved, and wondered about their ability to effectively communicate the perspective of First Nations, Métis and Inuit youth. Their reflections on the themes of the symposium spawned a number of discussions around barriers and challenges that are faced by Aboriginal communities in general and, specifically, are faced in the creation of prosperous indigenous economies.

Collectively, the delegates felt that, as a group, indigenous people need to reconcile the past with the future. First Nations, Métis and Inuit people negatively affect their future by focusing on the past. They recommended a stronger focus on building sustainable Aboriginal economies and, in order to achieve this goal, Aboriginal communities have to rethink how they do business. Delegates pointed to current economic performance by Aboriginal people that demonstrate that traditional methods of pursuing social and economic development have been ineffective. Part of that rethinking focused on the concentration of decision-making authority and the need for a clear separation between politics and business to improve transparency and accountability in Aboriginal communities.

Youth delegates also wanted stronger links built between them and their leadership. Whether it is Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal, they would like more formal and open access to their leaders and to play a role in leadership themselves. This would occur at different levels of government and industry.

Mentorship in education, government and business is crucial to youth, and they wished to see more formal mechanisms for mentorship that would allow them to gain from the experience and tutelage of senior people working in these sectors. Youth felt that there needed to more emphasis on guiding young people when they first begin their careers/businesses. It was suggested that more mentorship programs be implemented, both at school and within the field of work.

Youth with experience in community leadership spoke about how their ideas and organization can unravel without stable sources of funding and ongoing access to capital. Youth were especially interested in learning where they could get access to financing when they have no real assets and parents who may not be able to provide collateral. Governments are often the primary source of funding for youth enterprise, but there needs to be more vehicles for engaging youth in business and entrepreneurship, such as youth councils, and more involvement by business and industry in fostering the skills of young people.

The youth would like to see their futures and their career paths more clearly identified. Of note, this included a desire for improved succession planning in both the public and private sector. They would like some form of institutional assurance that once they have finished school and paid their dues at work, they will see it pay off in the form of career advancement.

The youth are concerned that their future is being compromised, and, in some cases, as one youth from northern Canada pointed out, it appears as though we will be left with one huge problem once our resources run out. Some of the youth still maintain a close connection to the land and they see the after effects of development. They indicated that development must occur in a sustainable manner.

APPENDIX B:
DELEGATES AGENDA

Tuesday, January 23, 2007

7:00 p.m. – 9:30 p.m. REGISTRATION / WELCOMING RECEPTION

Wednesday, January 24, 2007

7:00 a.m. – 8:00 a.m. **Buffet Breakfast (Registration is also available at this time)**

8:05 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. **Symposium Opening, Prayers and Welcoming Remarks**

9:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. **Challenge, Change and Development: Strategies for Success**
Highlighting First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities and Aboriginal businesses that have generated, and are sustaining, economic and employment benefits, panelists will identify key factors that have contributed to the economic success of these communities and business ventures. The goal is to assist other Aboriginal communities to build the conditions for successful economic development. Panelists will also discuss obstacles and challenges to achieving economic success faced by Aboriginal people as they pursue their individual and collective economic objectives.
Panel: Bernd Christmas, Marty Klyne, Dr. Wanda Wuttunee

10:00 a.m. – 10:45 a.m. **Refreshment Break (served in tradeshow area)**

10:45 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. **Workshops**

Opening the Toolbox for First Nations Economic Development
Judy Whiteduck and Lester Lafond

Opening the Toolbox for Métis Economic Development
Roland Duplessis and Doug Repay

Opening the Toolbox for Inuit Economic Development
Bill Lyall

Opening the Toolbox for Aboriginal Women's Economic Development
Mary Jamieson

Integrating Technology for Community Growth and Economic Development
Frank Suraci

Understanding Venture Capital
Grant Kook and Loree MacPherson

Procurement Policies
Jim Mabee and Holly Cooper

Government Strategies and Partnerships
Donavon Young, Vice Chief Guy Lonechild and Daniel-Paul Bork

Home Ownership on Reserve
Chris Maracle and Louise Atkins

12:15 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.	**LUNCH**
12:50:	**Honourable Maynard Sonntag** **Minister of First Nations and Métis Relations**
12:55:	**Rod Bruinooge** Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians
1:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.	**Maximizing Opportunities in Strategic Sectors** This panel provides an overview of best practices in strategic sectors from both community-based and business perspectives. Successful partnerships and alliances that have increased the participation of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people and communities in economic development are profiled. Panel: Chief Clarence Louie, Bill Lyall, Pat Turner
2:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.	**Refreshment Break (served in tradeshow area)**
3:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.	**Workshops** Information Technology Dwayne Hnatiw, Mike Bettens, and John Bernard Housing as an Economic Generator Chief John Beaucage, and Clifford Bird Innovative Partnerships in Banking Kay Lerat, Terry Grant, and Keith Martell Aboriginal Forestry – What is Required for Success? Lorraine Rekmans, Tribal Chief Helen Ben, and Mickey Werstuik Tourism Brenda Baptiste and Allan Luby Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce Ron Rivard, Pat Turner, and Edward Kidd Finding Economic Opportunities with Renewable and Non-renewable Resources Walter Smith and Drew Hill Transportation Albert Diamond and Ron Kocsis Enabling Partnerships and Policies Ian Crawford,Chief Roy Mishano, and Chief Judith Sayers Tradeshow will be open until 5:30 p.m.
6:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.	**Cocktails**
6:30 p.m. – 6:40 p.m.	**Official Entrance**
6:40 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.	**Gala Dinner and Entertainment**

Thursday, January 25, 2007

7:30 a.m. – 8:30 a.m. **Buffet Breakfast**
Opening Prayers

8:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. **What's Making a Difference in Training, Skills Development and Labour Market Development**
The business case for a representative workforce or the "return on social inclusion" is well documented. In this context, panelists explore approaches that have delivered results. The key factors behind successful labour market outcomes will be explored.
Panel: Elson McDougald, Len Flett, Anne Noonan

10:00 a.m. – 10:45 a.m. **Refreshment Break**

10:45 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. **Workshops**
Governance, Business Development and Human Resources
Allan Luby

Aboriginal Workforce Participation Initiative (AWPI) and Major Economic Opportunities: Building a Global Network of Historically Excluded Suppliers Through Partnerships
Rick Hansen

Aboriginal-Controlled Training Institutions: the SIIT and GDI Models Randall Morris, Geordy McCaffey, and Donna Desmarais

Youth Entrepreneurship
Wade Cachagee

The Aboriginal Employment Development Program and the Aboriginal Representative

Workforce Strategy
Wayne McKenzie and Larry Hubich

Role of Media and Communications
Roland Belrose and Leslie Lounsbury

Human Resources in the Hospitality Industries
Elma Shoulak

The Role of Co-operatives in Aboriginal Economic Development
Bill Lyall, Lou Hammond Ketilson, and April Roberts

12:15 p.m. – 1:45 p.m. **LUNCH**

1:00: **Kathy Pilidwar, Northern Greens Resort and Conference Centre**

1:05: **Dr. Manley A. Begay, JR**

CLOSING REMARKS FROM THE PREMIER OF SASKATCHEWAN

Thursday, January 25, 2007

Youth Forum

Thursday, January 25, 2007

2:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. **INTRODUCTION**
Opening Prayer
Chair of the Youth Forum, Monica Goulet

3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. **WORKSHOP 1: Reflections**
Allery Carrier, Tanyann Grey Owl Belaney, Tori-Lynn Wanotch

This workshop is intended to provide an opportunity for youth to reflect on the Panel Presentations and various workshops they have attended during the Symposium.

Discussions will be organized around broad themes. These themes have been identified as: *

1. Youth Entrepreneurship
2. Community and Business Leadership
3. Education for Success
4. Partnership Building for Success

Youth will be divided into smaller working groups to encourage participation. Discussions will be facilitated.

* These themes subject to change according to the Symposium proceeding which proceeds the forum.

4:00 p.m. – 4:15 p.m. **Refreshment Break**

4:15 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. **WORKSHOP 2: Looking Ahead**
Chair of the Youth Forum, Monica Goulet

A facilitated session where the floor is open to youth delegates who will be encouraged to share their own experiences and observations around challenges and successes in their respective jurisdictions.

5:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. **CLOSING REMARKS**
Chair of the Youth Forum, Monica Goulet
Forum Coordinator, Alyssa Peel

APPENDIX C: WORKSHOP GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

The Workshop Discussion Guide has been developed to support the key objectives of the National Symposium on Aboriginal Economic Development:

- *To showcase and celebrate successful First Nations, Métis, and Inuit economic development projects;*
- *To further build corporate/Aboriginal/government partnerships in economic development;*
- *To identify barriers to progress and solutions; and*
- *To develop a compilation of best practices, and analyze them to identify government, corporate, and Aboriginal policy approaches that provide the best environment for projects to succeed.*

This Workshop Discussion Guide provides background information and questions aimed at stimulating discussion during the Symposium's workshops. Like the Symposium itself, the Guide has three sections: (1) Challenge, Change and Development: Strategies for Success; (2) Maximizing Opportunities in Strategic Sectors; and (3) What's Making a Difference in Training, Skills Development and Labour Market Development.

The background section at the beginning of the Guide provides a brief environmental scan of Aboriginal demographics and entrepreneurship. Further statistical information on employment and education is found in the Guide's section on What's Making a Difference in Training, Skills Development and Labour Market Development.

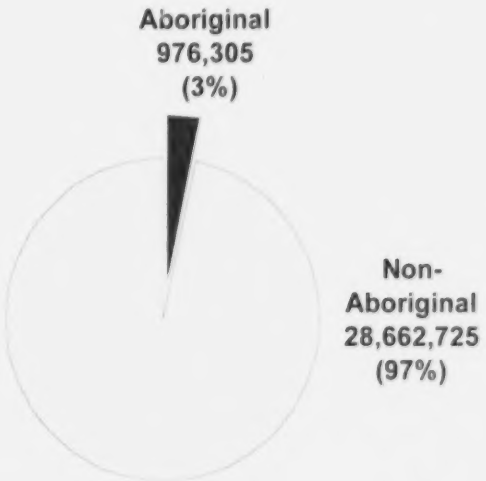
The Guide also provides a brief summation of the challenges and enablers of success in relation to Aboriginal economic development as recognized in many reports, including those produced for the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP), the Canada-Aboriginal Peoples Roundtable Economic Opportunities Session, the Conference Board of Canada, the National Aboriginal Capital Corporation Association, and academic studies such as the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development.

In the section on Maximizing Opportunities in Strategic Sectors, brief descriptions of the sectors are found, alongside examples of First Nations, Métis and Inuit-owned businesses and joint ventures. During the workshops, a number of other Aboriginal business ventures will be explored.

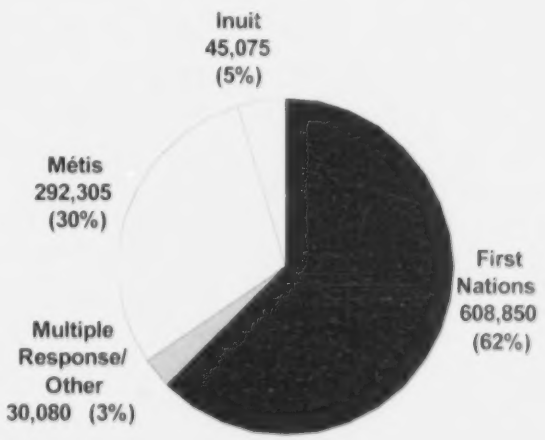
In the section, What's Making a Difference in Training, Skills Development and Labour Market Development, examples of initiatives aimed at increasing the education, skills and employment levels of Aboriginal people are provided.

BACKGROUND

First Nations , Métis, Inuit and Non-Aboriginal Populations (2001)



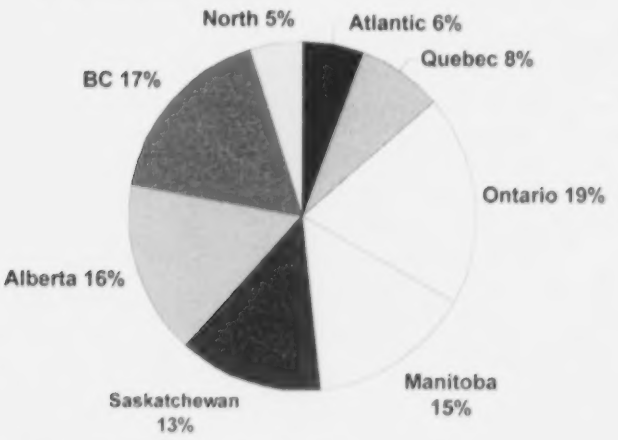
Source: Statistics Canada. 2001 Census



According to the 2001 Census, close to one million Canadians identify themselves as Aboriginal (i.e. of North American Indian, Métis, or other Aboriginal heritage.) Aboriginal people

accounted for about 3% of Canada's total population in 2001. Of those reporting Aboriginal identify 62% reported a single heritage as North American Indian, 30% as Métis, 5% as Inuit, and 3% as having multiple or other Aboriginal identities.

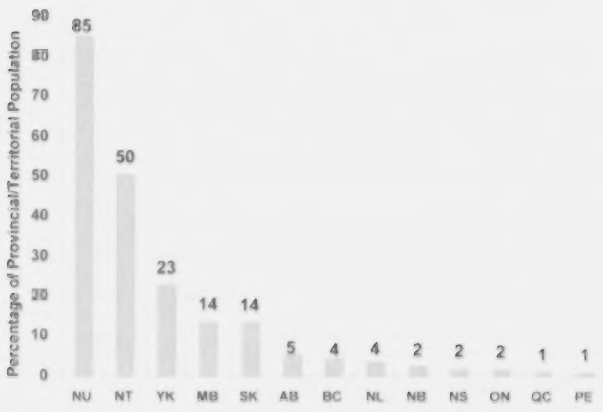
Distribution of Canada's Aboriginal Population (2001)



Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census

Approximately 5% of Aboriginal people live in the territories: 0.7% in Yukon, 1.9% in the North West Territories and 2.3% in Nunavut. One-third live in Atlantic and Central Canada and 61% live in the four Western provinces. In terms of Atlantic Canada, 0.2% of Canada's Aboriginal population live in

Aboriginal Population as a Proportion of Total Population (2001)

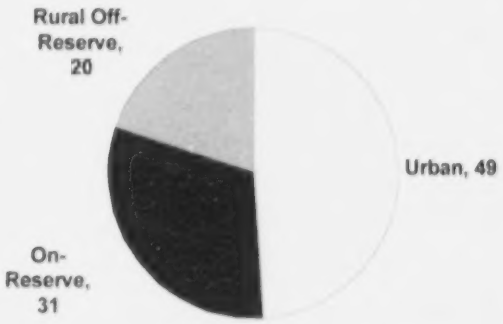


Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census

Prince Edward Island, 1.7% in each of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick and 1.9% in Newfoundland and Labrador. Aboriginal people represent only 1% of the provincial population in Quebec and Prince Edward Island, and up to 85% of the population in Nunavut.

The proportion of Aboriginal people living in provinces such as Manitoba and Saskatchewan is increasing rapidly because of higher birth rates and less inter-provincial migration. Aboriginal people account for about one in four new labour market entrants in Saskatchewan.

Urban/Rural/On-Reserve Residency of First Nations, Métis and Inuit Populations (2001)



Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census

According to the 2001 Census, the Aboriginal population more than doubled in most cities across Canada over the previous 20 years, and, in many cases, the Aboriginal population more than tripled. The most dramatic increase in population occurred in Saskatoon, where the Aboriginal population increased almost fivefold from about 4,200 in 1981 to more than 20,000 in 2001. Almost half of Aboriginal people in Canada now live in urban areas.

The Aboriginal population is much younger than the non-Aboriginal population, but the Aboriginal population has also been aging. The median age of Canada's Aboriginal population (25 years) was 13 years younger than that of the non-Aboriginal population (38 years) in 2001.

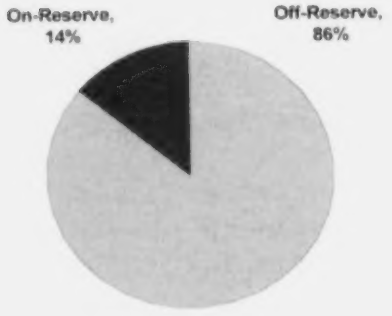
Aboriginal Entrepreneurship

According to the 2001 Census, Aboriginal self-employment has increased dramatically. Between 1996 and 2001, the number of self-employed Aboriginal people in Canada increased by 31% - a rate nine times higher than for self-employed Canadians overall. Over 27,000 First Nations, Métis and Inuit entrepreneurs are creating economic opportunities and making an important contribution to Canada's economy. These businesses are performing increasingly well in today's competitive environment, according to a national survey of Aboriginal business owners, conducted by Statistics Canada.

- *The vast majority of Aboriginal businesses are small and serve their local markets. Some of the community-owned businesses are larger, such as the forestry companies owned by the Meadow Lake Tribal Council in Saskatchewan and Cree Construction in Quebec, which employ hundreds of people in their area.*
- *Aboriginal-owned businesses are concentrated in business and personal services, retail/ wholesale trade, primary natural resources, and construction.*
- *In 2001, the number of manufacturing, transportation, and warehousing businesses was almost five times higher than in 1996.*
- *Aboriginal-owned businesses are growing, reporting profits and gaining ground in higher knowledge sectors such as professional, scientific and technical services.*
- *Export trade by Aboriginal firms is projected to grow by 15% to 20% annually.*
- *The majority of self-employed Aboriginal workers reside off-reserve (86%) and 14% reside on-reserve.*
- *47% of Aboriginal entrepreneurs are Métis;*
- *46% are First Nations;*
- *3% are Inuit.; and*
- *4% report "multiple and other heritage."*

The majority (63%) of self-employed Aboriginal people are male. On average, Aboriginal entrepreneurs are younger than non-Aboriginal entrepreneurs, with over one-quarter of Aboriginal Entrepreneurs under the age of 35.

Residence of Aboriginal Entrepreneurs

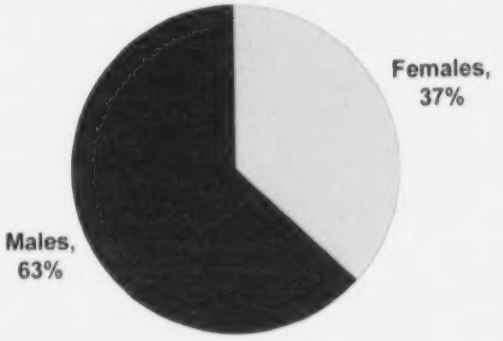


Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census

Aboriginal businesses are performing increasingly well in a competitive environment.

- *Most businesses (72%) surveyed in the Aboriginal Entrepreneurs Survey reported increased profits, 43% reported increased sales revenues and 39% reported stable sales between 2001 and 2002.*

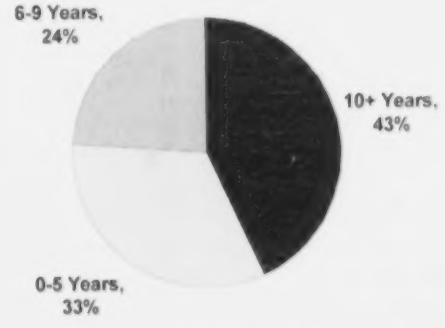
Gender of Aboriginal Entrepreneurs



Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census

- *Two-thirds of the businesses surveyed had been operating for more than five years, and 43% had been operating for 10 years or more.*
- *Over two-thirds of businesses surveyed operated under a sole proprietorship structure, 18% operated as a partnership and 15% were incorporated.*
- *The majority of Aboriginal entrepreneurs (77%) operate home-based businesses.*
- *The most important business objectives to Aboriginal entrepreneurs are stability, profitability, and personal/ family employment, with growth ranking fourth.*

Age of Aboriginal-Owned Businesses



Source: Statistics Canada, *Aboriginal Entrepreneurs Survey* (2002)

A: CHALLENGE, CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT: STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

The 1996 Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) incorporates input from an impressive collection of contributors including grassroots Aboriginal people, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal academics, and members of many other public and private organizations. The key issues concerning Aboriginal economic development identified in RCAP are consistent with the discussions that took place at the Economic Opportunities Session of the Canada Aboriginal Peoples Roundtable, i.e. improving:

- *access to capital and investment;*
- *economic opportunities from lands and resources;*
- *governance capacity; and*
- *regulatory/legislative frameworks to facilitate economic opportunities.*

Research specific to First Nations described similar barriers to economic development in a report examining the cost of doing business on-reserve:

- *absence of regulatory harmony, certainty and jurisdictional clarity;*
- *incomplete separation of politics and administration;*
- *poor access to financing;*
- *non-competitive infrastructure;*
- *reluctance of the Crown to take risk; and*
- *high search costs in accessing information*

The Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development was undertaken by Professors Stephen Cornell and Joseph Kalt in 1987 to help understand and build the conditions for ongoing and community-controlled social and economic development among American Indian nations. A 2006 paper presented to the Assembly of First Nations' Regional Vice-Chief of British Columbia reported on the findings of the Harvard Project and developed a linkage to the self-governance of First Nations in Canada and American Indian Nations in the US. Critical indicators to development success reported in the 2006 paper include:

- *possession of real decision-making authority;*
- *capable governing institutions that create an environment where community members are encouraged to invest time, ideas, energy, and money into the "nation's" future; and*
- *a cultural match between the governing institutions and the political culture.*

Fundamentally, the research outcomes could be summarized as, "those nations that had taken control of their own affairs and had backed up that control with capable, culturally appropriate, and effective governing institutions, did significantly better economically than those that had not." The fundamental issue put forward by the Harvard Project is that Aboriginal communities focus too much on actual developments instead of creating an environment conducive to business growth, political and economic institutions and appropriate development strategies. The absence of effective institutions has created many problems for Aboriginal communities.

RCAP described three "basic tasks" Aboriginal institutions of governance and economic development must undertake to become effective:

- *Mobilize and sustain support – they must be seen as legitimate by the people of the community or nation they serve;*
- *Implement strategic choices effectively and develop formalized roles and procedures in order that the work they do is perceived to be accomplished in a fair and accountable manner; and*
- *Establish a political environment that is safe for development.*

Significant consensus exists on the barriers to and enablers of successful economic development in Aboriginal communities that would apply to all economic sectors. The following table summarizes barriers/challenges and enablers.

Barriers and Challenges	Enablers to Success
Lack of appropriate development strategies	Strong leadership and vision
	Strategic community development plan
Absence of regulatory harmony and rules for business ventures	Clear rules providing clarity and certainty for business development
Poor access to financing	Access to capital markets
Access to management capabilities	Good governance and management
Incomplete separation of politics and administration	Positive interplay of business and politics
Absence of effective political and economic institutions	Transparency and accountability
	A cultural match between governing institutions and the political culture
Absence of jurisdictional clarity	Practical sovereignty/ possession of real decision-making authority
Rules outlining land rights and environment are not spelled out	Improved economic opportunities from lands and resources

Many successful strategies and institutions currently support Aboriginal economic development. Efforts must continue to build on examples such as the following:

- *Aboriginal Financial Institutions such as Aboriginal Capital Corporations and Aboriginal Community Futures Development Corporations that currently disburse approximately $70 million in loans to almost 2,000 Aboriginal businesses each year;*
- *The Aboriginal Human Resource Development Strategy that provided training courses that led to the return to work of more than 80,000 individuals between 1999 and 2004; and*
- *Continued negotiation of more revenue-sharing and impact benefit agreements.*

Questions for Discussion

1. What do you believe defines "successful" economic development for Aboriginal people?
   a. Is "successful" economic development in Aboriginal communities different than in non-Aboriginal communities? If so, how?
   b. Is the definition of success different for various Aboriginal groups? (e.g. Métis, Inuit, on-reserve First Nation, off-reserve First Nation, Aboriginal women, Aboriginal people living in cities, etc.).

2. What are examples of policies and initiatives that have led to successful economic development?

3. What do you believe to be key factors for achieving successful economic development?
   a. What key success factors has the workshop presentation highlighted?

4. What can be done differently to achieve successful economic development for Aboriginal people? (e.g. by First Nations, Métis & Inuit organizations or governments and institutions, federal, provincial, territorial and municipal governments and institutions, non-profit organizations, private sector, etc.)
   - What are the next steps?
   - Who is responsible for taking these steps?

B. MAXIMIZING OPPORTUNITIES IN STRATEGIC SECTORS

Primary Industries: About 20% of small and medium-size Aboriginal businesses are involved in primary industries, compared to about 16% of all Canadian businesses.

Forest Products

"Primary Forestry" includes companies engaged in harvesting trees, sawing and planing lumber, and production of pulp, paper, and panel board. "Secondary Wood Products" includes companies engaged in manufacturing of value-added wood products (e.g. furniture, prefabricated building components, doors and windows, kitchen cabinets, log homes) as well as industries utilizing wood residues to produce specialty chemicals, fibre products, and bio-fuels. The Canadian forest products sector is dominated by large multinational companies which tend to be integrated up and down the value chain. Aboriginal organizations such as the Meadow Lake Tribal Council are also important industry players.

The major market for Canadian forest products is the US. The rapidly growing economies of Asia represent a significant opportunity to grow demand for wood products, but Asian producers also compete with Canadian companies. Canadian mills are advanced technologically and workers are relatively highly skilled and productive.

NorSask Forest Products, owned by the Meadow Lake Tribal Council, is an award-winning state-of-the-art forestry operation which exports quality wood products to world markets. NorSask provides full-time employment for First Nations people and other community members, and the spin-off activities it creates are very beneficial to several First Nations contractors.

Agriculture/Agri-Value

The agriculture and agri-food system plays an important role in the Canadian economy, providing 2.1 million jobs (one in eight) and accounting for $84.1 billion or 8% of GDP. Export opportunities are critical for the growth of most agriculture industries. Canada was the fifth largest exporter of agriculture and agri-food products in the world in 2004. While primary agriculture accounts for a small share of the total economy, it is at the centre of the agriculture system, which also includes processing and distribution systems.

The Canadian agriculture and agri-food industry faces several challenges including technological change and the downward trend of net farm income resulting from growth in world production, long-term decline in commodity prices, competing exports from low cost producers, appreciating exchange rates, and higher energy and other input costs.

Aboriginal people have a long association with agriculture. Treaty land entitlements in Saskatchewan have helped increase First Nations participation in the sector.

Ellen Melcosky, president and CEO of Kelowna-based Little Miss Chief Gourmet Products Inc. has found success with her smoked salmon sensation. The company has exported to Spain and currently exports to the US and the Netherlands. Exports are expected to grow to 50% of sales with an aggressive marketing campaign. The company has received recognition for Aboriginal achievement and was also listed in the top ten by Food in Canada, Profit under Winners and was nominated for the Canadian Export 2001 Award.

Minerals

Canada is a world leader in the production and export of many important minerals including uranium, potash, cobalt, coal, titanium, nickel, aluminium, gold, diamonds, and others. Canada's minerals sector is comprised of mineral exploration, mining, and value-added activities, which together contribute over $40 billion to the Canadian economy, and account for approximately 4% of economic activity. In 2003, minerals-related exports represented one in every eight export dollars. Canada is one of the top three countries for mineral, and more exploration companies are based here than in any other country. Most mining companies operate globally. Over 2,200 companies supply mining goods and services in Canada. The industry directly employs about 400,000 Canadians and pays among the highest average wages.

KeTe Whii Ltd., co-owned by Dogrib Trustco, Deton'Cho Corporation and Densoline Corporation, obtained two nine-year contracts with an estimated value of $45 million to maintain the road and haul ore to the Ekati diamond processing plant. KeTe Whii also formed a joint venture with Procon Mining and Tunnelling to provide an expanded range of services to the mining industry. First Nation members have the first opportunity for jobs created by the company.

Strong markets for minerals and mineral products have resulted in higher prices for the industry, and demand continues to grow. Technological advancement has enabled the mining and processing of previously uneconomic deposits.

Approximately 1,100 Aboriginal communities are located within 200 kilometres of Canadian mining projects, creating an important source of economic opportunity.

Energy

Canada is fortunate to have secure, reliable, and diverse sources of energy, including crude oil, natural gas, coal, hydro, and nuclear. Canada is a world class energy producer – ranked as the 5th largest in the world. The country has one of the world's richest resource endowments and is also a leader in alternative energy sources including solar, wind, and biomass. Canada is the world's third largest producer of natural gas and proven oil reserves are second only to Saudi Arabia. Canada has over 200 years of proven coal reserves at today's production level.

Canada's petroleum exports are expected to increase by about 50% by 2020. In addition, there is an increased interest in Canadian fossil fuels from Asian consumers. Growing US energy imports mean more opportunities for Canada's energy sector in the form of oil, gas, and electricity. Canada's export production opportunities, however, will be affected by such things as climate change concerns.

UPNIT Power Corporation is a partnership between Hupacasath First Nation, Ucluelet First Nation, Synex Energy Ltd. and the City of Port Alberni. Since its formation in 2004, the company has been involved in environmentally friendly run-of-the-river energy – where energy is produced by diverting water out of a creek to flow over a vertical drop. The company's China Creek project will produce enough energy to provide power to 6,000 homes in British Columbia. UPNIT Power has secured a 20-year contract to supply power to BC Hydro.

Manufacturing

Manufacturing accounts for 21% of Canada's economic activity, and when spin-offs from the purchases of goods and services are included, manufacturers are estimated to drive over half of the Canadian economy. Manufacturing employs 2.2 million Canadians directly and another 2.5 million indirectly. Today, nearly 70% of all goods manufactured in Canada are exported (about $400 billion) up from 25% in 1980.

The largest manufacturing sector in Canada continues to be the automotive sector; however other sectors like petroleum, chemicals, machinery, and metal fabrication are growing in importance.

Sean McCormick is the young Métis entrepreneur behind the vision of Blue Moose Clothing Company. Operating under the name Fleeceline, the company manufactures a variety of authentic hand-crafted garments including mukluks, mitts, gauntlets, moccasins, slippers and other Aboriginal clothing. The company employs Sioux and Ojibway craftspersons who use high-grade materials such as leather, furs and sheepskin. As the largest manufacturer of mukluks in the world, Fleeceline has gained international attention in a variety of US-based pop culture magazines showing Hollywood stars wearing its products.

Construction/Housing

Construction, an important sector of Canada's economy, accounts for approximately 12% of GDP. The construction industry employs close to one million Canadians – one out of every 17 Canadian workers earns a living in construction. In 2006, the industry was involved in approximately $130 billion worth of projects, $60 billion of which were residential construction projects.

The construction industry is growing with housing starts more than doubling from just under 111,000 to over 225,000 in ten years from 1995 to 2005. The growth of the industry, combined with its aging workforce, represents many opportunities for young people in the near future and Aboriginal youth are considered to be an important, as yet largely untapped, labour source for the construction industry. Small and medium-size Aboriginal businesses are slightly more likely to be in the construction sector (15%) than are total Canadian small and medium-size businesses (12%).

Cree Construction and Development Company (CCDC) was established in 1976 and is owned by the James Bay Cree of Northern Québec. The company is one of the largest construction companies in Québec. CCDC is ISO 9001 certified and employs 700 workers during peak construction season.

Montreal Lake Construction Company (MLCC) is a division of the Montreal Lake Development Corporation and is wholly owned and operated by the Montreal Lake Cree Nation in Saskatchewan. The company has been manufacturing Ready-to-Move homes for over 20 years.

Tourism

The Canadian tourism industry is comprised of approximately 160,000 businesses which directly employ 625,700 people and account for almost 4% of the national workforce. Canadian

travelers contribute over 70% of tourism expenditures, with US travelers making up 88% of total international tourists to Canada. The tourism industry worldwide operates in a challenging environment, with concerns over global security, health scares, and natural disasters. In 2004, Canada slipped out of the top ten destinations as a result of growing competition from Europe and Asia, and a decline in visitors from the US.

A major study on the state of Aboriginal tourism found that in 2001, the direct contribution of all Aboriginal tourism businesses to GDP was $596 million of which just over half is from casinos.

In 2005, the $1.6 million, 12 room Kangirsuk Co-op Hotel was opened in an Inuit community of 500 people, located on the Payne River in northern Quebec. It is known for various outdoor activities, including trout fishing and game hunting, and bird, whale, seal and caribou watching. The project was completed with the assistance of various levels of government, industry associations and investment corporations.

Transportation

Four main modes of transportation make up Canada's transportation sector – air, truck, rail and marine. In 2005, commercial transportation accounted for 4% of Canada's value-added GDP; trucking alone accounted for 1.4% of GDP. Air passenger traffic was higher than ever in 2005 with over 63 million passengers. Transportation industries employ over 800,000 Canadians. In 2001, Aboriginal employees accounted for 2.5% of all employees in Canada's Transportation and Warehousing industry.

Northern Resource Trucking (NRT) started as a partnership between the Lac La Ronge Indian Band and Trimac Transportation. The partnership has expanded, and now includes twelve Aboriginal groups, including Métis, Dene and Woodland Cree. NRT has been providing service to Northern Saskatchewan mines for some of the largest mining companies in North America for 20 years. The company's customers include Cameco Corporation, AREVA, and Claude Resources Inc. They employ over 150 people and operate more than 90 trucks to service the remote northern mine sites.

In 1988 the Cree Nation of Quebec bought its partner, Austin Airways' share of Air Creebec to become the sole owner of the company. With over 200 employees, Air Creebec is not only providing excellent service to fourteen First Nations communities, five cities in Quebec and two cities in Ontario, but also is efficiently reacting to emergencies such as forest fires and floods in the local communities.

Advanced Technology

The Advanced Technology industry in Canada is comprised of several sub-sectors including information & communication technology (ICT), life sciences, biotechnology, electronics and instrumentation, environmental technologies, and advanced manufacturing.

Aboriginal Computer Solutions Ltd. (ACSL), a West Vancouver company owned by Peter Wealick, provides a full range of professional computer services with five employees and revenues of over $1 million last year.

Cree-Tech Inc. is the leader in geographic information systems and provides highly-specialized services to a niche market active in northern Ontario's natural resource economy.

Some specific opportunities to build on Aboriginal strengths in Advanced Technology include a strong international interest in Aboriginal arts and culture, which could be translated into electronic media and entertainment, and in traditional healing, which offers opportunities in nutraceuticals.

Financial Services/Banking/Insurance

Canada's financial services industry includes banks, trust and loan companies, credit unions and caisses populaires, insurance companies, mutual fund companies, leasing companies, financial advisors, and independent insurance agents, and brokers. The financial services sector is very integrated and many conglomerates have established subsidiaries to offer a variety of financial services to their customers.

The financial services industry employs over 600,000 Canadians and represented 6% of Canada's GDP in 2003. Canada's financial services sector plays an important role in international markets.

The National Aboriginal Capital Corporation Association (NACCA) was established in 1997 to assist its member Aboriginal Financial Institutions (AFI) in providing customized financial services to Aboriginal businesses across Canada. NACCA's membership has grown to 58 AFIs.

In addition to the AFI members of NACCA, there are many respected Aboriginal-owned organizations operating in every area of the financial services sector in Canada, such as the First Nations Bank of Canada and IMI Brokerage Company.

Saskatoon-based Many Nations Financial Services Ltd. assists Aboriginal organizations and their employees in achieving the best possible culturally appropriate and affordable solutions for their needs in pensions, employee benefits, insurance, retirement planning, and risk management. They offer participation in the largest First Nations multi-employer pension plan in Canada with $157 million in assets. The company serves 300 First Nations organizations

Peace Hills Trust is owned by the Samson Cree Nation of Alberta and is Canada's first and largest First Nation Trust Company. The company was established in 1980 and now employs over 120 people at eight regional offices across Canada.

The Clarence Campeau Development Fund provides equity for Métis businesses, support to community economic development initiatives, and assistance for the development of the management skills of new and existing Métis business owners and entrepreneurs in Saskatchewan

Questions for Discussion

1. What economic sectors provide the best opportunities for Aboriginal people? (e.g. Forestry, Non-renewable Resources, Advanced Tech, etc.)
   a. Are these sectors different from those providing opportunities for non-Aboriginal communities?
   b. Are they different for specific Aboriginal groups? (e.g. on-reserve First Nation, off-reserve First Nation, Métis, Inuit, Aboriginal women, Aboriginal people living in cities, etc.).

2. What do you believe to be key success factors for Aboriginal people and organizations participating in sectors such as _____? (the sector under discussion in the workshop, if applicable)
   a. What are examples of initiatives that have led to success?

3. What roles do partnerships have in increasing Aboriginal participation in _____? (or other key sectors?)

4. What can be done differently to increase Aboriginal participation in _____? (or other key sectors?)
(e.g. by First Nations, Métis & Inuit organizations or governments and institutions, federal, provincial, territorial and municipal governments and institutions, non-profit organizations, private sector, etc.)
   - What are the next steps?
   - Who is responsible for taking these steps?

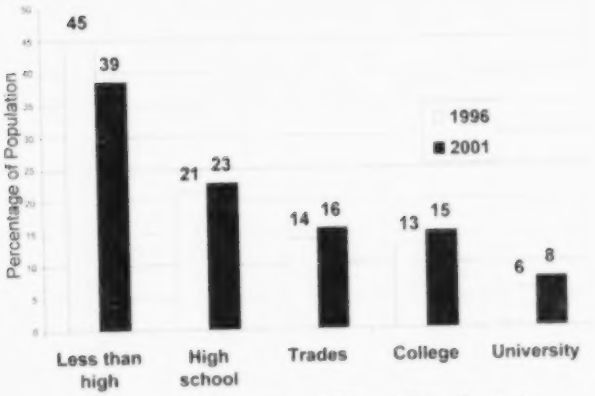
C. WHAT'S MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN TRAINING, SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND LABOUR MARKET DEVELOPMENT

An economic boom in the resource sectors has contributed to the lowest unemployment rate in 30 years in Canada. Labour shortages are being felt in Alberta and other western provinces where businesses are attracting workers from throughout Canada and abroad. Employers also are more aggressively recruiting and retaining Aboriginal people in their workplaces. Aboriginal employment has increased significantly over the last three years. With labour shortages expected to intensify over the next number of years as baby boomers start to retire, Aboriginal people will become an increasingly important part of the Canadian workforce, particularly in the North and in the Western provinces. Workplaces and Aboriginal people themselves need to be thoroughly prepared for these opportunities.

Education

Education and skill levels of Aboriginal People have been steadily increasing.

Highest Level of Education Attained Aboriginal Identity, Age 25 to 64 (1996 and 2001)



Source: Statistics Canada, 1996 and 2001 Census

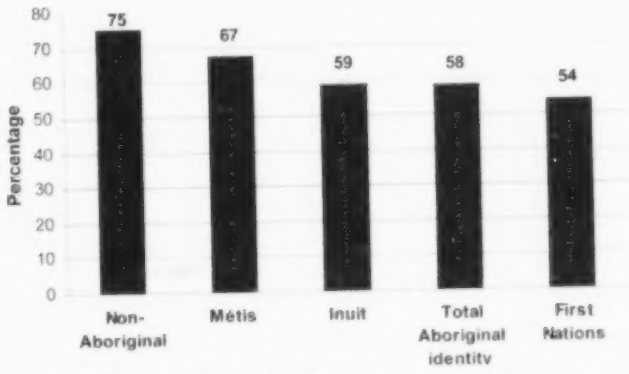
The number of Aboriginal people (age 25 to 64) with a university degree increased by 33% between 1996 and 2001 and the proportion with a college degree also increased. The proportion of people living on-reserve with a university degree did not change – in part due to university graduates not moving back to reserves.

- *The number of Aboriginal people age 25 to 64 with a high school diploma increased by 9% while the proportion without a high school diploma decreased substantially from 1996 to 2001.*
- *The education level for all Canadians is increasing and the level of education of Aboriginal people must increase more quickly in order to close the gap. Over 20% of the non-Aboriginal population of labour force age had a university degree in 2001 compared to 8% of the Aboriginal population. Employment opportunities are expected to continue to require higher levels of education.*

Employment Trends

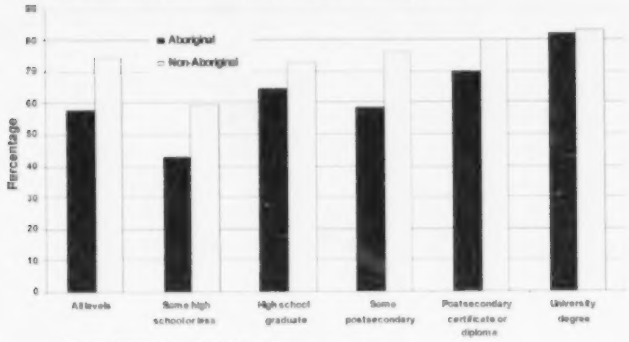
In 2001, about 58% of Aboriginal people age 25 to 64 were employed compared to 75% of non-Aboriginal people. The good news is that employment rates for Aboriginal people living off-reserve, who have completed high school, are increasingly similar to employment rates of non-Aboriginal people with similar education levels. Newly released statistics for 2006 indicate that in the four western provinces, the employment rate gap for off-reserve Aboriginal people with a high school diploma is only 3 percentage points.

Employment Rates of Population Age 25 to 64 by Aboriginal Identity (2001)



Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census

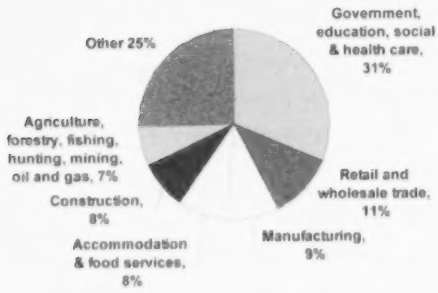
Employment Rates of Population Age 25 to 64 by Educational Attainment and Aboriginal Identity (2001)



Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census

* Source: Sask Trends Monitor from Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey Data

Employment of Aboriginal People by Industry (2001)


Government, education, social & health care, 31%
Other 25%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, mining, oil and gas, 7%
Retail and wholesale trade, 11%
Construction, 8%
Manufacturing, 9%
Accommodation & food services, 8%

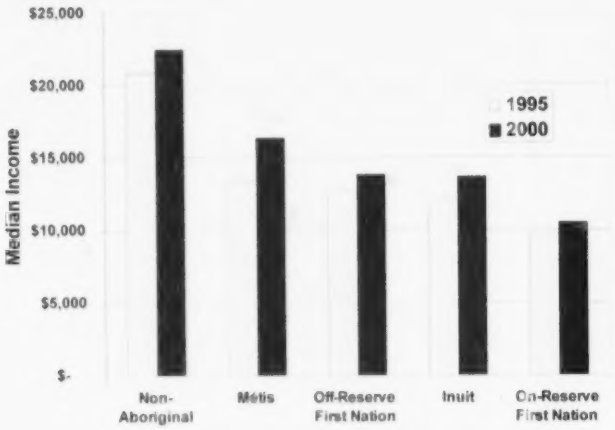
Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census

Aboriginal people primarily work in public administration, education, health care, trade, manufacturing, hospitality, construction, and resource sectors. Aboriginal people, relative to non-Aboriginal people, are twice as likely to be working in public administration which would include working for Aboriginal governments. They are also twice as likely to be working in mining and oil and gas extraction, reflecting industries prevalent in the North and in Western Canada where large proportions of Aboriginal people live. Aboriginal people are most under-represented in areas such as management, finance, insurance, professional, scientific and technical services, and information industries. Employment levels are related to education, training and personal interests as well as to economic activities prevalent in areas where Aboriginal people are living.

Incomes

Median income levels for Aboriginal people increased by about 13% between 1995 and 2000, with incomes for Métis people having the greatest increase. The incomes of Aboriginal people, however, are almost $9,000 less than incomes of non-Aboriginal people.

Incomes



Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census

Innovative Education, Training and Employment Initiatives

Many of the innovative initiatives that are increasing the education, skills and employment levels of Aboriginal people involve partnerships among Aboriginal organizations, government, education institutions, the private sector, and non-profit organizations. The following are examples of initiatives that are making a difference.

- *Aboriginal Entrepreneurship: Albian Sands Energy Inc. sponsors a one-year program in Aboriginal Entrepreneurship through Keyano College in Fort McMurray, Alberta. The program allows individuals working in Aboriginal business settings to acquire business skills and knowledge without having to leave their jobs or relocate their families, and in an environment that is supportive and sensitive to their needs.*
- *The Aboriginal Drilling Rig Training Program was launched in October 2004 by Western Lakota to introduce more Aboriginal people to the energy services industry. A two-week course is delivered directly in Aboriginal communities. The first week consists of personal empowerment training. Classroom instruction addresses safety issues, the theory behind drilling rigs, and emergency first aid. Five days involve training on a portable drilling rig platform built by Western Lakota. The Training Program Coordinator keeps in touch with graduates once they're on the job site, for up to 180 days. The program has achieved a 90% completion rate, and 70% to 80% of graduates are retained in full-time employment in the oil and gas sector.*

- *BladeRunners: The program enables at-risk youth to receive hands-on training in construction and related trades. Over 50% of youth find work after their program has ended and 70% stay involved in the construction trades. The Government of British Columbia sponsors the program and has developed strategic alliances with building trades unions, contractors, and the development industry.*

- *The Graduate Microprogram in Education: The Université de Montréal developed a program for the First Nations Education Council, focusing on training teachers from First Nations schools to integrate Information and Communications Technologies as part of their teaching. Videoconferences, classroom instruction and online discussion groups are all part of the program. Fifteen students enrolled in the program in 2005.*

- *The Multi-Party Training Plan: Fourteen agencies participate in a unique multi-stakeholder partnership that supports the training, hiring and advancement of residents of northern Saskatchewan (more than 80% are Aboriginal) in the mining industry. More than 1,200 training certificates have been awarded in apprenticeship, technical and skills training, and in academic upgrading over ten years during Phase I and Phase II. A new five-year agreement for Phase III was signed in 2003, bringing total investment in training for highly skilled jobs up to $40 million.*

- *The Hydro Northern Training and Employment Initiative: The $60.3 million multi-year initiative, funded by the Government of Manitoba and the Government of Canada, will provide training to over 1,000 Aboriginal residents in Northern Manitoba to prepare them for employment opportunities created by the construction of two new Manitoba Hydro hydroelectric generating stations in their area.*

- *Kagita Mikam: Kagita Mikam, an Area Management Board, provides Aboriginal employment and training services, with funding from the federal government, to First Nations and Inuit residents within its catchment area, west from Oshawa and east to Ottawa. The organization offers several programs, including self-employment assistance, a stay-in-school initiative, and a job creation partnership. Since its inception in 1991, Kagita Mikam has provided countless individuals with the assistance they needed to start their own businesses, providing more employment opportunities in their communities.*

- *Aboriginal Skill Employment Partnership New Brunswick (ASEP-NB Inc.): A partnership among New Brunswick Forest Product Association, First Nations and their organizations, and provincial and federal governments, was established in 2004 with a four-year mandate to train and create employment for First Nations people within New Brunswick's forestry sector. Since ASEP-NB's inception, close to 200 workers have received Professional Forest Worker Certification and over 40 full-time seasonal placements have been created.*

- *Strings Across The Sky (SATS): Instructors volunteer their time and talent to run "fiddle schools" in 17 Arctic communities. SATS has collected over 300 donated violins. Hundreds of students have built up their confidence, learned communication tools, and developed reading and math skills while learning to play the fiddle. SATS students have had the opportunity to play with Canadian orchestras through "The Cross-Canada Fiddle" program, and some SATS students have even performed in Scotland. The registered charity relies on corporate supporters and individual donations for funding.*

- *Aboriginal Workforce Participation Initiative: The Aboriginal Workforce Participation Initiative (AWPI) has forged many partnerships with some of Canada's top corporations as well as with public administration organizations. Examples of AWPI partnerships include one with Michelin North America, the Governments of Canada and Nova Scotia, the Union of Nova Scotia Indians, and the Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq; and another with the Brandon Regional Health Authority and numerous First Nations and Métis organizations in Manitoba, relevant unions in the health care sector, education institutions, and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. These partnerships are aimed at improving the hiring and retention of Aboriginal people in the workplace and identifying barriers that discourage participation.*

Questions for Discussion

1. What are examples of success in advancing education, training and skill development of Aboriginal people? (e.g. by Aboriginal organizations, governments, education and training institutions, non-profit organizations, employers, etc.)
    a. What has led to these successes?

2. What could be done differently to increase education, training and skill levels of Aboriginal people? (e.g. by First Nations, Métis & Inuit organizations, federal, provincial, territorial and municipal governments, education and training institutions, non-profit organizations, employers, etc.)
    - What are the next steps?
    - Who is responsible for taking these steps?

3. What are examples of success in increasing Aboriginal employment, retention, and advancement? (e.g. by First Nations, Métis & Inuit organizations, education and training institutions, governments, non-profit organizations, employers, and others)
    a. What has led to these successes?

4. What could be done differently to increase Aboriginal employment, retention and advancement? (e.g. by First Nations, Métis & Inuit organizations, federal, provincial, territorial and municipal governments, education and training institutions, non-profit organizations, employers, etc.)
    - What are the next steps?
    - Who is responsible for taking these steps?